

Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'
Treatises of the Brethren of Purity

The *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (*Epistles or Treatises of the Brethren of Purity*) were written around the middle of the fourth/tenth century by a group of philosophers from Baṣra who called themselves the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (Brethren of Purity). The authorship of the *Rasā'il* has been the subject of controversy in modern scholarship, but their Ismaili affiliation cannot be doubted if one reads their *al-Risālat al-jāmi'ah*, a summary, as well as the esoteric interpretation of the *Rasā'il*, which has been wrongly attributed to Maslamah al-Majrīṭī (d.ca. 398/1007). The *Rasā'il* comprise fifty-two epistles that are the result of an integration of divine laws revealed to the prophets with Pythagoreanism, Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and Ismaili/Shi'i theosophy. They are arranged in four sections: (1) the Mathematical Sciences, which consist of fourteen treatises; (2) the Physical and Natural Sciences, which consist of seventeen treatises; (3) the Psychological and Rational Sciences, which consist of ten treatises and (4) the Divine Sciences, which consist of eleven treatises.

The central ideas in the *Rasā'il* are the purification of the human soul, attainment of knowledge and human brotherhood. The emphasis throughout the *Rasā'il* is to turn man from the sleep of negligence and the slumber of ignorance to the awakening of the soul to knowledge and its purification by actions according to true knowledge before entering Paradise. The knowledge that they emphasized embraced all divinely revealed knowledge, and all the branches of traditional knowledge available to them. These different branches of knowledge and different revealed laws, according to them, were medicines and potions for the treatment of sick souls suffering from ignorance, and their means for the salvation from the 'sea of matter and bondage of nature' and regaining the best form in which man had been created by God.

At the heart of the *Rasā'il* is the symbolic significance of numbers and Pythagorean mathematics, which these treatises reflect more fully than practically any other work of Islamic thought. In a sense the *Rasā'il* are syntheses of the more esoteric currents of early Islamic thought associated especially with Shi'ism, with

both Hermeticism and Neopythagoreanism all integrated into an Islamic esoteric perspective.

In this chapter we have included three treatises. The first section consists of two epistles concerned with the Ikhwān's concept of man. The idea presented by the Ikhwān is that man is the microcosm that epitomizes all the qualities found in the universe, which they called the macrocosm. Man's wholeness is shown by drawing parallels to many of the created phenomena in the universe. The description in these epistles, the use of symbols and analogies, the poetic beauty, and a mystical quality they render, are unlike the other epistles. These two epistles in a sense summarize the whole corpus of the *Rasā'il*.

In the second section, the first treatise of the division of mathematical sciences of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* has been included. Following a discussion concerning divisions of abstract sciences into four sections: abstract, logical, natural and theological, further subdivisions are made such as arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, etc. The treatise then discusses the nature of numbers, their natural order, special properties, friendly numbers and different categories of them. After an extensive and highly analytical discussion, the treatise is brought to a conclusion with a brief discourse regarding the goal of the sciences.

The third selection is concerned with what is now known as the ecological and environmental crisis. The treatise is based on a fable in which animals charge man with environmental degradation and disregard for others, and they complain to the king of jinns. The translation is a selection from *The Case of the Animals Versus Man before the King of the Jinn*.

The *Rasā'il* occupy a unique position in the history of Islamic thought and have exercised a great influence on the Muslim intellectual elite. The complete text of the *Rasā'il* was first published in 1305–1306/1887–1889 in Bombay, then in 1928 in Cairo (ed. by K. Zirikli), and then in 1957 in Beirut.

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MICROCOSM AND MACROCOSM

Twenty-sixth Epistle

Translated for this volume by Latimah Parvin Peerwani from *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, ed. Kh. al-Zirikli (Beirut, 1957), pp. 3–24 and 73–81. The numbers in brackets in the body of the text refer to the pagination of that edition.

On the Maxim of the Sages that 'The Man is a Microcosm'

[3] In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Praise be to God, and peace be upon His servants whom He has chosen. 'God is better than what they associate [with Him]'.

Know, O brother—may God inspire (or assist) you and us with a spirit from Him— ... we would like to mention in this epistle the meaning of the maxim of the sages that 'the man is a microcosm'.

Then we say, know that the first sages observed this corporeal world with the vision of their eyes and witnessed the manifest dimensions of affairs with [the perception of] their senses. Then they reflected upon its states with their intellects, scrutinized the characteristics of its universal individuals with [their] insights, and considered the varieties of its individual things with their deliberation. They did not find a single part [of the cosmos] more complete in structure, more perfect in form, and more corresponding in its totality to the cosmos than man. [4] For verily man is a totality brought together from a corporeal body and a spiritual soul. [The sages] found likenesses for all the existent things of the corporeal world in the structure of his body's constitution, such as the astonishing composition of [the world's] celestial spheres, its different kinds of constellations, the motions of its planets, the composition of its pillars and 'mothers' (*ummahāt*, i.e., four elements), the diversity of its mineral substances, the various kinds of plants, and the astonishing bodily frames (*hayākil*) of its animals.

Moreover, they also found different kinds of spiritual creatures, such as the angels, the *jinn*, the human beings, the satans, the souls of other animals, and the activity of their states similar to the human soul with its powers permeating in the structure of the body.

When these affairs became clear to them in the human form, they named [this form] a 'microcosm'. Here we want to mention a few of these likenesses and similarities so that they give an evidence of the soundness of their view about him, and an explanation of their description of [man] so that it is nearer to the understanding of the learners and easy for the seekers [of knowledge] to contemplate upon them.

On Considering the States of Man with Respect to the States of Existent Things According to our Explanation Here

We say, all the existent things are substances and accidents brought together from matter and forms, and composed from the twain, as we explained in the epistle on 'Matter and Form'.¹ All the accidents are either corporeal or spiritual, as we explained in the epistle on 'The Intellect and the Intelligible'.² Man in his totality is brought together from two substances connected [to each other]; one of the twain is this corporeal body which has height, breadth, and depth, and is perceptive by means of the senses, the other is this spiritual soul, [capable of] vast knowledge and perception by means of the intellect.

The corporeal body [of man] is a structure which is a combination of the organs of different shapes, such as hands, arms, head, neck, spinal chord, hips, knees, legs, and feet. Each one of them is also composed of the parts which are of different forms, ambiguous (*mutashābih*) in parts, such as: bone, nerve, blood vessels, flesh, skin, etc., as we explained in the epistle on 'The Composition of the Body'.³ The [above parts] [5] are also engendered from the four humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile, and they are also born from the chyme. The chyme is produced from the food, the food from the plants, and the plants from the four pillars [or elements], as we explained in the epistle on 'Plants'.⁴ Each one of [these four elements] is constituted of two natures out of the four known natures, as we explained in the epistle on 'Generation and Corruption'.⁵ Each one [of these four natures] is a form which completes the body and at the same time is a base for the other thing in the natural bodies, as we explained in the epistle on 'Matter and Form'.⁶

Matter and form are also two substances which are simple, spiritual, intelligible, created and originated as willed by their Creator, exalted be His glory, for activity and passivity, and to be receptive [to His will] without the instrumentality of any mode, time, or space but through His saying, 'Be, and it becomes' [Qur'ān, 2:117 etc.], as we explained in the epistle on 'Intellectual Principles'.⁷

As for man, his state is what you observe. He is, as we reported, a totality brought together from a dark body and a spiritual soul. If one takes into account the state of his body and what it contains, such as the astonishing composition of its organs, and the diverse formation of its articulations, [one finds that] it resembles a house [prepared] for its dweller. But when one takes into account the state of his soul, the wonders of its controlling powers in the structure of the bodily frame, and the

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1. *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, vol. 2, fifteenth epistle, pp. 3–19.
 2. *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, thirty-fifth epistle, pp. 227–242.
 3. *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, twenty-third epistle, pp. 318–333.
 4. *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, twenty-first epistle, pp. 128–151.
 5. *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, seventeenth epistle, pp. 45–53.
 6. *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, first epistle, pp. 5–17.
 7. *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, thirty-third epistle, pp. 200–210.

permeation of [its] powers in the various parts of its body, [one finds the soul] resembles a dweller in his house along with his servants, wife, and children.

If one considers [the man] in another respect, one finds that the structure of his body with diversity of the shapes of its organs and the variety of the composition of its articulations is similar to the shop of an artisan. In the same way his soul in respect of the permeation of its powers [or faculties] in the structure of his bodily frame, its marvellous acts in the organs of his body, and the various movements in the articulations of his body, is similar to an artisan in his shop with his disciples and apprentices, as we explained in the epistle on 'The Practical Crafts'.¹

In another respect, if one considers the structure of his body in respect of the multiplicity of the combinations of the strata of his bodily frame, the wonders of the composition of the articulations of his body, the many diverse organs, the branching and division of his blood vessels and their extension into the regions of the organs, the disparity in the [blood] vessels in the depths of his body, and the activity of the faculties of the soul, [the man] resembles a city full of bazaars with various crafts, as we explained in the epistle on 'The Composition of the Body'.²

[6] In another respect, if [man] is considered from the point of view of the soul's governing control over the states of the body, its good management, and the permeation of its powers and activities in the structure of this body, then [man] resembles a king in a city with his soldiers, servants, and retinue, as we discussed in the epistle on 'The Intellect and Intelligible'.³

In another respect, if one considers the state of the [human] body and its being engendered along with the state of the soul and its configuration with the body, the body resembles the womb and the soul resembles the embryo, as we explained in the epistle on 'The Configuration of the Particular Soul and its Emergence from Potentiality into Actuality'.⁴

In another respect, if one considers one finds the body like a ship, the soul like the captain, works like the goods of traders, this world like the ocean, death like the shore, the next world like the city of merchants, and God the Exalted like the king who gives recompense there.

In another respect, if one considers one finds the body to be like a horse, the soul like the rider, the world like a racecourse, and works like the race.

In another respect, if one considers one finds the soul to be like a farmer, the body like a farm, works like seeds and produce, death like the reaping, and the next world like the threshing floor, as we explained in the epistle on 'The Wisdom in Death'.⁵

1. *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, eighth epistle, pp. 210–226.

2. *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, twenty-third epistle, pp. 318–333.

3. *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, thirty-fifth epistle, pp. 227–242.

4. *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, twenty-seventh epistle, pp. 25–36.

5. *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, twenty-ninth epistle, pp. 52–67.

In another respect, if one considers one finds the marvellous frame of the body, as we explained in the works on anatomy, and the numerous ways the soul benefits from the sciences due to its association with the body, [the body] resembles a school of sciences and the soul resembles a pupil in the school, as we explained in the epistle on 'Sense and the Sensible'.¹

In another respect, if one considers the composition of the body, the permeation of the powers of the soul in [the body], and controlling the states of man, [one finds the man] resembles a record full of sciences. It is [also] said that [man] is the epitome of the 'Guarded Tablet'. The sages have constructed many similes [in that context]. We desire to mention briefly some secrets [of those similes] according to what is befitting us.

Man is the Epitome of the 'Guarded Tablet'

It is mentioned that there was a king who was a sage and a chieftain. He had small children [7] who loved him dearly and revered him. He wanted to teach them good manners, cultivate them, and discipline them so that they became fit for joining his court, for it was not befitting for any one to come to the assemblies of the kings except those who were cultivated by courtesy, disciplined in sciences, moulded by beautiful character-traits, and purified of the blemishes. He thoughtfully and prudently arrived at an idea that he should build for them a castle which should be one of the most fortified of buildings, and each one of them should be given a separate seat in it. All around the assembly-hall [in the castle] there should be written every kind of science which he desired them to learn, and to make the forms of everything he desired by means of which to cultivate them.

[When the castle was ready, he brought them] in the castle and seated every one of them in the place allocated for each one, and at their service were placed the attendants, [both] the maidservants and male-servants. Then he said to those sons, 'Observe around you what I have sketched before you; study what I have written in it for you; meditate upon what I have explained in it for you, and reflect on them in order to know their meanings whereby you will become outstanding philosophers (*ḥukamā'*) and righteous learned men. Then I will receive you in my assembly. You will become my favourite, eminent confidants. You will always be in comfort so long as I am there and you are with me'.

Now what he had written in that assembly-hall for them was something from [each] science. On the highest dome of the assembly-chamber he had sketched the form of spheres, explained their mode of circular motion; the constellations and their apogee, the planets and their motions. Besides, he had clearly given their proofs and laws.

1. *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, twenty-fourth epistle, pp. 334–352.

In the courtyard of the assembly-hall he had sketched the form of the earth, the division of climes, the terrain of mountains, oceans, lands, and rivers, and explained the borders of towns, cities, highways, and countries.

In front of the assembly-hall he had written the science of medicine and the science of natures; the forms of plants, animals, minerals with their species, genres, and individuals, and explained their characteristics, their advantages and disadvantages.

On the other side [of the assembly-hall] he had written the science pertaining to artisans and merchants and explained the mode of cultivating [land] and breeding [animals]. He had sketched cities and markets and explained the rules pertaining to buying and selling, interest, and commerce.

On another side of [the assembly-hall] he had written about the science of religion, communities, *sharāʿi* [revealed divine laws] and customs (*sunan*); and explained what was lawful and prohibited and penal laws and ordinances.

On another side [of the assembly-hall] he had written about politics (*siyāsah*) and governance of the country, and explained the mode of levying tax, [8] and the method of keeping records and accounts. He had [also] explained the sustenance of the army, the protection of the subjects, and the separation of the armed forces from the bodyguards.

Those were the six genres of sciences by which the princes were trained. But this is a parable struck by the sages. The wise king signifies God the Exalted; the small children mean mankind; the castle edifice implies the sphere in its entirety; the allocated seats symbolize the human form; the pictorial cultural presentations (*ādāb*) imply the astonishing composition of the [human] body; and the sciences written in it signify the faculties of the soul and its knowledge (*maʿārif*). We will explain this briefly later on in different chapters.

On the Eminence of the Substance of Soul

We say, know that the substances of the [human] souls have a 'dwelling place' (*manzilah*) and esteem before God which the substances of physical bodies do not have. That is because of their proximate relation to Him, and the distant relation of the corporeal bodies to Him. The reason for this is that the substances of the souls are living in themselves, knowing and active, whereas the substances of the corporeal bodies are dead and passive, so they are unlike them. We have already explained in the epistle on 'The Intellectual Principles'¹ that the relation of the existent things to the Exalted Creator is like the relation of numbers to [the number] one. The Intellect corresponds to two, the Soul to three, the Primal Matter to four, Nature to five, the Body to six, the sphere to seven, the pillars [or elements] to eight, and the 'offsprings' (*mawlūdāt*, i.e., the three kingdoms: minerals, plants, and animals) to nine.

1. *Rasāʾil*, vol. 3, thirty-third epistle, pp. 200–210.

In another respect, the relation of the soul to the intellect is like the relation of the light-ray of the moon to the light of the sun. The relation of the intellect to God is like the relation of the light of the sun [effusing] from the sun. Just as when the moon becomes full from the light of the sun its light becomes an imitation of the light of the [sun], in the same way when the soul receives the effusion from the intellect its virtues become perfect and its acts imitate the acts of the intellect. When its virtues become perfect then, it knows its essence [or self] and the reality of its substance. When the virtues of its substance become clear to it, then it comes to know the states of its realm which is the human form. For God the Exalted has created man in the best stature, and shaped him in the most perfect form, and made his form a mirror for Himself in order to see the form of the macrocosm in it. [9] That is because when God, exalted by His sublimity, desires to inform the human soul about the treasures of His knowledge, and makes it witness the cosmos in its totality, He knows that the cosmos is too vast, and it is not in the capacity of man to go around the cosmos so that he witnesses the whole of it because his life is too short and the cosmos is too big. So out of His wisdom He decided to create for it a small condensed world from the big world. He fashioned in the microcosm everything that was there in the macrocosm and modelled it in its presence and made it witness it, as He the Mighty said, 'He made them bear witness on their souls: Am I not your Lord? All of them said: "Yes"' [Qur'ān, 7:72]. Now among them whoever was a learned witness, and knew its reality, his witnessing it was true, but whosoever was ignorant, his witnessing was rejected, because He, the Mighty and Sublime, said, 'Except for the one who bears witness by truth, such are the ones who have knowledge' [Qur'ān, 43:86]. Don't you see that He does not accept the witnessing of anyone except of the people of knowledge?

Then know that the 'opening' to all kinds of sciences lies in man's knowledge of his self [or soul]. Man attains knowledge by three ways: [1] by considering the states of his body, the composition of its structure, and the attributes related to it without [considering] the soul; [2] by considering the states of his soul and the attributes pertaining to them without [considering] the body; [3] by considering the states of both [the soul and body] as connected to each other and the attributes related to the totality [of the two]. We have already explained some of these considerations in our epistle on 'The Composition of the [human] Body'.¹ In this epistle we would like to mention another aspect of it. So we say:

On Considering the States of Man with Respect to the States of the Spheres

Know that God the Exalted has made similes and allusions in the composition of the human body pointing to the composition of the spheres, the constellations, the heavens (skies) and their levels. He has made the permeation of the powers of the

1. *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, twenty-third epistle, pp. 318–333.

soul in articulations of his body and in its different organs like the permeation of the powers of the genera of angels, the tribes of *jinn*, man, and satans in [various] levels of the heavens and the earth, from the highest of the high to the lowest of the low.

There is a likeness between the composition of the human body and the composition of the spheres. The spheres have seven levels which lie within the cavity of each, as we explained in the epistle on 'Introduction to Astronomy'.¹ [10] In the same way nine substances are found in the composition of the human body which lie within the cavity of each other, enveloping [each other] in the likeness of [the spheres]. They are: the bones, marrow, flesh, blood vessel, blood, nerves, hair, nails and skin. The marrow is in the cavity of bones, stored for the time when needed. The bundles of nerves are on the articulations so that they are held together and do not sever. The cavity in them is filled with flesh for their protection. In the cavity of the flesh there are arteries, veins, and capillaries for its protection and well-being, and everything is covered by the skin, which is a covering as well as beauty for them. The hair and nails grow due to the skin [lit. matter] for the purpose [of beautifying the body]. So the body altogether becomes similar to the composition of the spheres in quantity and quality. That is because [spheres] have seven levels. The former are seven substances, and the latter lie within the cavity of each other. The former are the similitude of the latter.

The celestial sphere is divided into twelve constellations. It is found that in the structure of the [human] body there are twelve openings resembling it. They are: the eyes, ears, nostrils, nipples of the breast, mouth, navel, and the channels of excretion.

Among the constellations six are southerly and six are northerly, in the same way six openings are found in the [human] body on the right side and six on the left which resemble the [spheres] both in quantity and quality.

In the celestial sphere there are seven moving planets through which the laws of the celestial sphere and generated things are regulated. In the same way there are seven active powers in the body through which there is the well-being of the [human] body.

These planets (*kawākib*) have souls and bodies. They perform physical acts in the bodies, and spiritual acts in the souls. In the same way seven physical faculties are found in the [human] body. They are: the faculties of attraction, fixation, digestion, repulsion, feeding, growth, and formation; and seven other faculties which are spiritual. They are the [five] sensible faculties: [the faculties of] sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, speech and intellect. The sensible faculties correspond to the five moving planets, the faculty of speech corresponds to the moon, and the faculty of intellect corresponds to the sun. Each one of the five planets has two domiciles in the celestial sphere, one in the domain of [11] the

1. *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, third epistle, pp. 114–117.

sun and one in the domain of the moon, whereas the sun and the moon have one domicile, as we explained in the epistle on 'Astronomy'. In the same way, it is found that in the structure of the [human] body each one of the sensible faculties has two channels, one on the right side and one on the left. The channel of the power of sight is in the eyes, that of hearing is in the ears, that of smell is in the nostrils, that of touch is in the hands, and that of the concupiscent taste is in the mouth which is more toward the right side [of the body], and in the genitals which is more toward the left side [of the body].

As for the power of speech, its channel is from the throat to the tongue, whereas the power of the intellect is at the centre of the brain. The relation of the power of speech to that of the intellect is like that of the moon to the sun. The moon derives its light from the sun in the course of traversing twenty-eight mansions of the moon. In the same way the faculty of speech derives the meaning of the words from the intellect in the course of traversing the throat and interpreting it through the medium of the twenty-eight letters of the [Arabic] alphabet. The relation of the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet to the power of speech is like the relation of the twenty-eight mansions to the moon.

In the celestial sphere there are two constellations, the head and tail. Their essence (or self, *dhāt*) is hidden but their acts are manifest. Through them the stars bear fortune and misfortune. In the same way it is found that in the [human] body there are matters which are hidden in themselves but their acts are manifest. Through them there is the well-being of the body and the health of the acts of the soul. They are the healthy and unhealthy temperaments. That is because, if the temperament of the humours of the body is sound, then its parts are healthy, the acts of the soul are harmonious and they run a natural course. But if the temperament gets corrupted, then the physical structure [of the body] is disturbed, and the acts of the soul are hindered and blocked in their course. The misfortune of the two constellations has harmful effect on the sun and the moon, because they become the compelling causes of their eclipse. In the same way unhealthy temperament has harmful effect on the rational and intellectual powers because it greatly and severely obstructs their activities.

The eyes in the [human] body correspond to the two domiciles of Jupiter in the celestial sphere, the ears to that of Mercury, the nostrils and nipples of the breast [12] to that of Venus, the channels of excretions to that of Saturn, the mouth to the domicile of the sun, and the navel to the domicile of the moon. The navel is the gate to the nourishment in the womb before the birth [of man], the mouth is the gate to the nourishment whilst [man] in this world is the channels of excretion are juxtaposed to [the navel and mouth] just as the two domiciles of Saturn are juxtaposed to the two domiciles of the sun and the moon.

Just as in the sphere there are constellations in which there are limits, dimensions, and degrees, and they have different qualities, in the same way in the [human]

body there are organs, articulations, blood vessels, nerves, and different kinds of bones which correspond to the limits of the spheres. However, the explanation [of all this] will take too long so we abandon mentioning that.

On the Similarity of the Human Body to the Four Elements

We say; know that below the sphere of the moon there are four pillars (or elements). These are the mothers (*ummahāt*) through whom the offspring—the animals, plants, and minerals—subsist. In the same way, within the structure of [human] body are found four parts which make up the whole of the body: the head, the breast, the belly, and the area from the abdomen to the bottom of the feet. These four correspond to those [four]. The head corresponds to the element fire in respect of the visual rays and sensory motions. The breast corresponds to the element air because of the breath and the breathing of air. The belly corresponds to the element water in respect of the moistures within it. The area from abdomen to the bottom of the feet corresponds to the element earth because it is established upon [the earth], just as the other three [elements] are established above and around the earth.

These four pillars give rise to vapours from which winds, clouds, rain, animals, plants, and minerals are engendered. In the same way the four members give rise to vapours in the human body, like mucous from the nostrils, tears from the eyes, and saliva from the mouth, the winds born in the belly, and the liquids that come out, like urine, excrement, and others.

The structure of the [human] body is like the earth. Its bones are like mountains, its bones' marrow like the minerals, its abdomen like the ocean, its intestine like rivers, its veins like streams, its flesh is like the land, its hairs are like the plants, the places where hair grows [13] like good soil, the places where it does not grow like briny earth, the face down to the feet like a flourishing city, the back like some ruins, the front of the face like the east, behind the back like the west, the right like the south, the left like the north, the breathing like the winds, [the person's] speech like the thunder, his shouts like lightning, his laughter like daylight, his weeping like rain, his despair and sorrow like the darkness of night, his sleep like death, his wakefulness like life, the days of his youth like the days of spring, the days of his young manhood like the days of summer, the days of his maturity like the days of autumn, the days of his old age like the days of winter.

His motions and acts are like the motions and rotations of the planets, his birth and his presence like the ascendant stars, his death and his absence like [the stars] that have set, the regularity in his affairs and states like the regularity of the stars, his retreat and retardation like their retreat, his sicknesses and maladies like their combustion, his pause and perplexity in some matters like their pause, his ascending to a position and exaltation like their rise to a position and illumination, his decline from a position and fall like their decline and fall to their perigee, his

union [with his spouse] like their union, his conjugation like their conjunction, his separation like their dispersion, his gesture like their appearance.

Just as the sun is at the head of the planets in the celestial sphere, so also among men there are kings and leaders. Just as the planets are connected to the sun and to each other, so are people connected to kings and to each other. Just as the planets turn away from the sun through strength and increase of light, so also people turn away from kings through power [to rule], robes of honour, and [high] degrees.

Just as Mars is related to the sun, so is the head of the army to the king. Just as Mercury is related to the sun, so are scribes and viziers to the kings. Just as Jupiter is related to the sun, so are the judges and possessors of knowledge related to the king. Just as Saturn is related to the sun, so are the treasurers and lawyers related to the kings. Just as Venus is related to the sun, so are the members of the harem and singers related to the kings. Just as the moon is related to the sun, so are the rebels related to the kings. Just as the moon takes light [from the sun] at the beginning of the month until it stands face to face with it and resembles it in light, becoming familiar to it in its condition, in the same way, rebels follow the command of kings, then they refuse to obey them and struggle against them in the kingdom.

[14] In addition, the states of the moon are similar to the states of the things of this world, that is, animals, plants, etc., since the moon begins to increase in light and perfection at the beginning of the month until it becomes complete in the middle [of the month]. Then it starts to decrease and dissolve and is effaced by the end of the month. In the same way, the states of the inhabitants of this world increase in the beginning. They never cease growing and being configured until they are complete and perfect. Then they begin to decline and decrease until they dissolve and come to nothing.

On the Numerous Faculties of the Soul

We say, this body with its numerous astonishing things, the order of its organs and the diverse ways of the formations of its articulations is similar to a city. The soul is like the king of that city, its numerous faculties like the soldiers and helpers, its acts and motions in it like the subjects and servants. That is because the human soul has many powers [or faculties] which can only be enumerated by God the Exalted. Each of these faculties has a passage in one of the organs of the body which is other than another faculty, and each faculty has a relation with the soul which is different from the relation of other [faculty]. We desire to mention something about it so that it gives some indication about the rest [of the faculties].

The [soul] has five powers of sensation which are like the masters of information. The soul appoints each one of them to a region in its kingdom in order to bring information of that region without any other power associating with it. Its

explanation: the hearing power's channel is through the ears. The soul has appointed it to perceive only the audible things which are sounds. The sounds are of two species: animal and nonanimal. The nonanimal [sounds] are like the sound of drum, thunder, stone, tree, wind instrument, string instrument, and whatever resembles these [sounds]. The animal [sounds] are of two species: sounds [which express] rational speech, and sounds [which do not express] rational speech. The sounds which do not [express rational speech] are like the neighing of a horse, the braying of a donkey, the mooing of an ox. In short, the sounds of the nonrational and rational animals are of two species: indicative (*dallah*) and nonindicative. The nonindicative [15] is for instance, tunes, melodies, laughter, weeping, scream, groan, etc. The indicative [sounds] are those which are expressed through language. They indicate the meanings in the thoughts of the souls, as we discussed in the epistle on 'Logic'.¹

Each species [of sounds] are [further divided into] other species and individuals whose number is known only to God, the One and Victorious. The audible power is appointed [by the soul] to perceive [the sounds] [and] is responsible for bringing their reports to the faculty of imagination whose dwelling place is the frontal lobe of the brain. This power, in perceiving these sounds and bringing their reports, is similar to the master of reports of the king who brings reports to him from one of the regions of his kingdom.

As for the power of sight, its passage is in the eyes. The soul has appointed it to perceive the objects of sight which are divided into many species. Among them are: lights and darkness, colours which are black, white, red, and yellow and the rest of the colours born through the combination [of these four]. In addition, among the objects of sight there are measures which possess depths, shapes, forms, motions, and repose. Each species [of visual things] has below it other species, which in turn have individuals below them. All of them are under the perception of the power of sight which controls and discriminates them and brings their reports to the faculty of imagination whose dwelling place is the frontal lobe of the brain. The relation of this power to the soul is like the relation of the guard and postman to the king who bring reports to him from every region of his kingdom.

As for the power of smell, its channel is through the nostrils. The soul has appointed it to perceive odours, and control and discriminate them. They are of two species: pleasant and unpleasant. The pleasant [odours] are called good [odours], and the unpleasant ones are called stinking. Below each species [of odours] there are other species which do not have individual names as the rest of the sensations have. But the rational faculty ascribes [name] to each odour when it is conveyed to it through inhaling. Hence it is said, the smell of musk, the smell of camphor, the smell of aloes, the smell of narcissus, etc. From the point of what is being inhaled,

1. *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, tenth epistle, pp. 309–321.

[the odours] are plenty whose number can only be enumerated by God the Exalted. The power of smell is appointed [by the soul] to perceive [the odours] and control them by bringing their reports to the faculty of [16] imagination. Its relation to the soul is like one of the information officers to the king, as we explained in the context of the powers of vision and hearing.

As for the power of taste, its channel is through the tongue. The soul has appointed it in connection with tastes, to perceive them, to control them and discriminate them from each other. They are of nine species. The first one is sweet [taste], which is agreeable to the nature of man. The second one is bitter [taste], which is disagreeable to the nature of man. Then there are intermediary [tastes]: sour, saline, greasy, pungent, acrid, strong, and fresh. Each one of them has many species, and each species has individuals, whose number is not known to any one but God, the One, and the Victorious.

The power of taste, which is in the tongue, has been appointed for the purpose of attaining tastes by perceiving them, controlling them, discriminating them from each other, and bringing their reports to the faculty of imagination. Its relation to the soul is like the relation of the information officer to the king, analogous in the affair as [the powers] of hearing, sight, and smell.

As for the power of touch, its channel is through the hands. The soul has appointed them for the affair of the tangible objects. They are of ten species: hot, cold, moist, dry, smooth, coarse, hard, soft, heavy, and light. Each one of these has under it many species, and each species has individuals whose [number] is known only to God, the Sovereign, the Overpowering Ruler, the Invincible, and the Victorious. The power of touch which [manifests] through the hands is appointed for the purpose of tangible objects, for perceiving and controlling them, for discriminating them from each other, and bringing their reports to the faculty of imagination. Its relation to the soul is like the relation of one of its sisters mentioned above.

The soul with these five powers, the different sensations, and whatever is under every genus [of sensation], species, and individuals of different forms, various shapes, and different structures, resembles the five great messengers among the prophets. Their sender is One, but their *sharā'i'* are different. Each *sharī'ah* consists of various obligatory acts, different laws, and variegated customs. Under the [jurisdiction of those] laws there are many communities whose number can only be enumerated [17] by [God] the Necessary Being, the One in every respect. Just as those communities refer to God to separate them from what they differ, the same is the case with all the sensibles. Their reference [point] is the rational soul for discriminating them from each other and making each one know its realities. It arbitrates over them and grants them their waystations (*manāzil*).

Know; O my brother, that to the human soul has been ascribed five other faculties. Their relation to the soul is other than the relation of the five [powers] mentioned above. Their permeation in the organs of the body is different from the permeation

of those, and their acts do not resemble their acts. That is because, these five powers are like assistant associates for attaining the forms of information. The relation of the three of them to the soul is like the relation of the king's confidants [to the king] who are always present in his assembly, informed about his secrets, and helping him in some special tasks. These are: the faculty of imagination (*al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah*) whose channel is the frontal lobe of the brain; the faculty of reflection (*al-quwwat al-mufakkirah*) whose channel is the middle of the brain, and the faculty of memory (*al-quwwat al-ḥāfizah*) whose channel is the back part of the brain. The relation of one of them to the soul is like the relation of the chamberlain and interpreter to the king. And it is the rational faculty which informs [the soul] about the meanings of reflection on the sciences and [their] needs. Its channel is the throat [stretching] till the tongue. The relation of one of them to the soul is like the relation of the minister to the king who is designated by him for the administration of his kingdom and governance of his subjects. This is the faculty through which the soul manifests writing and all kinds of arts. Its channel is the hands and fingers. These five faculties for attaining [various] forms of information [for the soul] are like a corporation.

Its explanation: When the faculty of imagination obtains the sense impressions from the [five] senses perceived by them and transmitted to it, it collects all [this information] and passes them to the faculty of reflection whose channel is the central lobe of the brain. [This faculty] isolates [the information], and realizes right from wrong, truth from error, benefit from loss, and then transmits that [information] to the faculty of memory, whose channel is the back part of the brain, to preserve it for the time when needed and recalled. [18] The rational faculty obtains those preserved impressions, interprets that [information] whilst explaining to the faculty of hearing of those present at the time.

The sounds stay in the air until the ears take their share, then they fade. But the divine wisdom and divine providence have decreed, and nature has striven to register those sounds in the art of writing. That is, if the power of art [of writing] wishes to fix them, it moulds them with the pen in the forms of letters in different colours and retains them in scrolls so that the knowledge of the past remains beneficial to those passing by, and there remains the trace of the earlier [generations] for the later generations, and a discourse from those who are already gone to those who are present. This is the most significant favour of God the Exalted to man about which He mentions in His Scripture. For He said, 'Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he knew not' [Qur'ān, 96:3–5].

Know, O my brother, if an intelligent and understanding person reflects on this power mentioned above, and on the mode of its permeation in the organs of the body, on its control in perceiving the sensibles, on its conceptualizing the patterns of information, and on informing the soul about everything in all circumstances, then this will be a witness to him from itself for itself, and an indication from himself that the Universal Soul has many powers dispersed in the atmosphere of

the spheres, in the various levels of the heavens, in the 'pillars of the mothers' [i.e., the elements], in the animals and plants; that they are charged with protecting the creation, and are set up for the well-being of the universe. They are the angels of God, sublime be His name, which are the most sincere and pure among His worshippers in realizing Him [from all created attributes]. They do not disobey God in what He commands them. They do what He commands them to do without any address to transcendence or word. In the same way these powers fulfil the needs of the soul without [uttering] a word or address to it.

It will also become clear to him that God, sublime be His laudation, is cognizant of the secrets of all the worlds as well as their conditions. Nothing escapes Him from their affairs, not even an atom's weight [of a thing]; similarly man's soul is cognizant of all the sense impressions of its senses and the reports of its faculties. They follow its command in what should be brought to it from the reports of their sense impressions without a word or address.

On Considering the States of Man with Respect to Existent Things Below the Sphere of the Moon

[19] As for considering [the states] of man with respect to existent things below the sphere of the moon, know that existent things below the sphere of the moon are of two kinds: simple and compound. The simple [things] are the four pillars: fire, air, water, and earth. The compound [things] are the things that are born from them, the engendered, corruptible things, I mean, animal, plant, and mineral.

The mineral is the first to be engendered, and then plant, then the animal, then man. Each kind possesses a characteristic that it is the first to acquire. The characteristic of the four pillars [i.e., elements] is the four natures—heat, cold, wetness, and dryness—and the transmutation of some of them into others. The characteristic of a plant is to take nourishment and to grow. The characteristic of an animal is sensation and movement. The characteristic of man is rational speech (*nutq*), reflection, (*fikr*) and deducing logical proofs (*barāhīn*). The characteristic of angels is that they never die.

Man may share the characteristics of all these kinds. Man has four natures, which accept transmutation and change like the four pillars. He undergoes generation and corruption like a mineral. He takes nourishment and grows like plant. He senses and moves like an animal. And it is possible that he will never die, like the angels, as we explained in the epistle on 'Resurrection'.¹

Know, O my brother, the animal is of many species. Each species has a characteristic different from the others. Man shares with them in all their characteristics. But [animals] have two characteristics that embrace all the others: seeking benefits and

1. *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, thirty-eighth epistle, pp. 276–304.

fleeing from harmful things. [However], some [animals] seek benefits through severity and domination, such as predators. Some seek benefits by barking, such as, dogs and by mewing, such as, cats. Some seek them through artifice, like spiders. And all this is found in man. Kings and sultans seek benefits through domination, beggars through asking and humility, artisans and merchants through artifice and friendliness.

All [animals] flee from harmful things and enemies, but some repel the enemy from themselves by killing, severity, and domination, like predators, and some through fleeing, like rabbits and deers. Some [animals repel] through weapons and armour, like hedgehogs and turtles, and some through fortifying themselves [20] in the earth, like mice, vermin, and serpents. And all of this is found in man: he repels enemies through severity and domination. If he fears for himself, he wears weapons. If he cannot master [the enemy], he flees from him. If he cannot flee, he defends himself through fortifications. Sometimes man repels his enemy by artifice, just as the crow overcame the owl in the book *Kalilah wa Dimnah*.

As for man's sharing with the engendered things their characteristics, you should know O my brother—may God assist you, and us, with a spirit from Him—that every species of the animal has a special characteristic imprinted within its nature, and all of these are found in man. Man is brave like the lion, timid like the rabbit, generous like the rooster, stingy like the dog, chaste like the fish, proud like the crow, wild like the tiger, sociable like the dove, clever like the fox, gentle like the cow, swift like the gazelle, slow like the bear, mighty like the elephant, servile like the camel, thieving like the magpie, haughty like the peacock, guiding like the sand grouse, astray like the ostrich, skilful like the bee, strong like the dragon, dreadful like the spider, mild like the lamb, spiteful like the donkey, hard working like the bull, headstrong like the mule, dumb like the whale, a great talker like the nightingale and the parrot, usurping like the wolf, auspicious like the sandpiper, harmful like the rat, ignorant like the pig, sinister like the owl, and full of benefit like the bee.

In short, there is no animal, mineral, plant, pillar, celestial sphere, planet, constellation, or existent thing possessing an element without that [characteristic] or its likenesses being found in man, as we have already discussed about everything in short. These matters which we have mentioned in the case of man are not found in any species of existent things in this cosmos except in man.

This explains why the sages have said that man alone stands after multiplicity, just as God, sublime be His laudation, alone stands before all multiplicity. On the basis of what we have enumerated, the astonishing composition of the human body, the wonderful controls of his soul, and what manifests from his total structure: the arts, sciences, character traits, opinions, systems (*tarā'iq*), schools of law (*madhāhib*), works, acts, utterances, and physical and spiritual effects, he is named 'microcosm'.

[21] Therefore, O brother, meditate on this [human] frame [or body] which is based on wisdom, ponder on this 'Book' which is full of knowledge, and reflect on this 'straight path' which is stretched between paradise and hell so that you succeed in [doing] good deeds (*khayrāt*) through it, and are able to cross on the straight path. Meditate on this 'scale' whose axiom is 'equity', so that you know the weight of your good and evil deeds. Do the reckoning of your [deeds] before the capital [of your time] finishes, for indeed paradise is beyond all these [matters].

Remember what God has warned you against, and mentioned it to you in His words, 'Thy soul sufficeth as reckoner against thee this day' [Qur'ān, 17:14], and 'This Our scripture pronounceth against you with truth. Lo! We have caused (all) that ye did to be recorded' [Qur'ān, 45:29], and He said, 'This is My straight path, so follow it' [Qur'ān, 6:153].

If you are not good at how to recite this Book, or how you should reckon this 'reckoning', or how you should weigh this 'scale', or how you should cross this ['straight] path', then come to [our] '*Majlis*' (assembly) of the Brethren. There will be advisors for you, or sincere noble-hearted friends for you who are distinguished, best scholars. They will love you, and will be affectionate to you. They will make you know about that which you will not refuse; they will teach you that about which you will become certain and will have no doubt in it by witnesses from your self [or soul], and logical proofs from your essence, and denotations from your substance. If your soul awakens from the sleep of heedlessness, and slumber of ignorance, and you observe things with your insight as they observe, and follow their just conduct as they follow, and practice according to their good custom, and gain an understanding of their intellectual *sharī'ah*, then you will enter their spiritual city. You will assume their angelic character-traits; you will know their sound opinions, and learn about their true information. Then you will be confirmed with the post-eternal spirit of life, and live the life of the fortunate ones which is blessed, everlasting, post-eternal by your pure eternal soul, not by your body which is subject to decay and annihilation.

Know that Divine wisdom and providence has made the organ of every member of the animal [kingdom] correspond to the whole of its body, about which we have already explained in the epistle on 'The Merit of Relation'.¹ We desire to mention an aspect of it in this epistle in order to elucidate the comparison between microcosm and macrocosm.

[22] Man is the most perfect among existent things, and most complete among engendered things below the sphere of the moon. His body is one of the parts of the whole cosmos, and this part is similar to things in [their] totality. Also, the human soul is more similar to the Universal Soul—the Soul of the whole cosmos—than [the other] particular souls. Hence the powers and acts of his soul which permeate

1. This is a chapter from the sixth epistle of the *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 189–194.

the structure of his body are similar to the powers of the Universal Soul which permeate the whole cosmos.

Its explanation: In the structure of the Universal Soul's Body which is the whole cosmos, there are seven eminent beings constantly in motion which govern [the course of events] by the permission of the Sovereign, the absolute Ruler, the Mighty and Sublime. Each one of them has a body in which there is spirit called soul. Each one of them does certain acts in the world which are specific to it alone, which are mentioned in the works on the laws of astronomy. In the same way, God the Exalted has placed in the structure of the human body organs whose structures correspond to the whole of his body. He has created for every organ [of the body] a power which is specific to it in order to manifest by it its acts in the structure of the body and all around it. He has also made its acts correspond to the acts of the spiritual powers of the seven planets.

Its explanation: [The relation of] the mass of [heart] to the body is like the relation of the sun to the whole cosmos. That is to say, its mass lies at the centre of the spheres, about which we have explained in the epistle on 'The Heavens and the Universe'.¹ In the same way, God the Exalted has placed the mass of the heart in the centre of the body. Just as from the mass of the sun the light and rays disseminate to the whole cosmos, and its spiritual powers permeate all parts of the cosmos, through which there is life of the cosmos and its well-being, in the same way the heat disseminates from the mass of the heart. It permeates the arteries and [and through them] to all parts of the body, by which there is life of the body and its well-being.

Also the relation of the [mass of the] spleen to the body is like that of Saturn to the cosmos. That is, the mass of Saturn disseminates its spiritual powers with its rays which permeate all parts of the cosmos, and through these powers there is the attachment of forms to matter and their persistence by the permission of God. In the same way, from the mass of the spleen there disseminates black bile which is cold and humid. It permeates the blood in the arteries [and spreads] to all parts of the body, by which the wetness [23] in the blood remains constant and the parts [of the body] remain attached to it. The reality of what we have said and the validity of what we have described are known to the group proficient in the art of medicine and those who are well-grounded in the philosophical sciences.

Also, the relation of the mass of the liver to the body is like that of the mass of Jupiter to the cosmos. That is [to say] from its mass there disseminates rays with its spiritual powers which permeate [various] parts of the cosmos, through which there is the order of its parts, balance of its pillars, the proportion of its existent things in the cosmos in excellent states and most perfect qualities. The reality of what we have said is known to the sages, the prophets and their vicegerents—the Imams—who are the treasurers of divine knowledge and the trustees of His mysteries.

¹ *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, sixteenth epistle, p. 30.

Also, the relation of the mass of the gall bladder to the body is like that of Mars to the cosmos. That is, from its mass there disseminates its spiritual powers with its rays which permeate all parts of the cosmos, by which the existent things attain stability and reach the utmost degree of [their] ends. In the same way, from the mass of the gall bladder there is disseminated yellow bile which permeates the blood [and spreads] to all parts of the body. It is the attenuant for the humours, returning them to their ultimate goals and final ends.

Also, the relation of the mass of intestines to the body is like that of Venus to the cosmos. That is, from its mass there disseminates with its rays its spiritual powers which permeate all parts of the cosmos. [These powers] create joy, pleasure, and cheerfulness in all physical and spiritual creations in the cosmos. Through them there is embellishment of existent beings and beauty in engendered things of the cosmos, by which I mean, both the world of celestial spheres and the world of mothers [or elements]. In the same way, from the mass of the intestines, there disseminates concupiscent power which seeks nutrition which is the mass for the body, and matter for the humours, and through it there is life in the body, the pleasure of living and physical subsistence in the human and natural bodies.

Also, the relation of the mass of the brain [to the body] is like that of Mercury to the cosmos, that is, because from its mass there disseminates along with its rays its spiritual powers which permeate all parts of the cosmos. Through them there is sensation (*ḥiss*), consciousness and cognition (*'irfān*) in all the creatures of all the worlds—the angels, mankind, *jinn*, Satans, and all the animals. In the same way, from the centre of the brain there disseminates a power by which [man has] sensation, consciousness, mind (*dhihn*), reflection, vision (*ru'yat*), and all kinds of knowledge.

[24] Also, the relation of the mass of the lungs [to the body] is like that of moon to the cosmos, that is, from its matter there disseminates with its rays its spiritual powers which at times permeate the world of the pillars [i.e., of the elements], and at times the world of celestial spheres. [The moon] is between [the two states of] being manifest [and being hidden]. That is, one half of the mass of the moon is always full of light, and one half of it is always dark. [For instance,] at the beginning of the [lunar] month it faces the world of pillars [i.e., of the elements] with its face full of light, but toward the end of the month it faces the world of the celestial spheres. The reality of what we have said, and the soundness of what we have explained is known to the scholars of the science of *Almajest* and astronomy. In the same way, from the mass of the lungs there disseminates power which at one time attracts the air from outside the body and sends it to the heart, and from there it blows in the arteries, and from the arteries to all parts of the body. It is called the pulse. By it [i.e., the air] the body has life. At another time it exhales the air from inside [the body] as a result of which there are respiration, sounds and all [kinds of] speech.

So, O brother, wake up from the sleep of heedlessness and the slumber of ignorance. May God give you and us and all our brothers success in doing the right

thing, and may He guide you and us and all our brothers on the rightly guided path. Indeed He is kind to all His servants.

Forty-third Epistle

The Nature of the Way Leading to God, the Almighty and Glorious

In the Name of God the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

[73] Praise be to God, and peace be upon His servants whom He has chosen. ‘God is better than what they associate [with Him]?’ [Qur’ān, 7:9]

Know, O brothers—may God inspire (or assist) you and us with a spirit from Him—that God the Blessed and Exalted created the creation and regulated it; He ordered its affairs and made them run their course. ‘Then He established Himself upon the Throne’ [Qur’ān, 10:4], and exalted Himself.

It was from the grace of His mercy, extreme generosity and complete beneficence that He selected a group of His servants, He chose them and drew them near Him, and He intimately conversed with them, and unveiled to them the hidden content of His knowledge and His unseen mysteries. Then He sent them to His servants in order to invite them toward Him and to His vicinity, and report to them about the hidden content of His mysteries so that they [could] arise from the sleep of ignorance and awaken from the slumber of heedlessness, and live the life of men of learning; live the life of the fortunate ones and reach the perfection of existence in the realm of eternity as it has been mentioned in His Scriptures and described in the languages of His messengers, may the peace of God be upon them. For He said, ‘He created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He mounted the Throne’ [Qur’ān, 7:54]; and, ‘Lo! God chose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of ‘Imrān above all people’ [Qur’ān, 3:33]; and, ‘God sent the messengers as bearers of glad tidings and warners, and with them He sent the Book’ [Qur’ān, 2:213]; and ‘God doth call to the Home of Peace: He doth guide whom He pleaseth to a Way that is straight’ [Qur’ān, 10:26].

Know, O brothers—may God assist you and us with a spirit from Him—that it is not possible to arrive there except by two traits. One is the purity of the soul (*nafs*), and the other is the straight way.

As for the purity of the soul, that is because it is the essence of man’s substance. Verily, the name ‘man’ applies to soul and body. The body is this visible corpse which is composed of flesh, blood, bones, blood-vessels, nerves, skin, etc. All these are earthly masses which are dark, heavy, mutable, and corruptible. Whereas the soul is a substance, which is celestial, spiritual, living, luminous, subtle, dynamic, incorruptible, cognizant, and perceptive to forms of things. Its likeness in perceiving the forms of existent things which are sensible and intelligibles is that of a mirror. If the mirror is proper in shape, and its surface

is polished, then you see the forms of physical things in their reality, but if the mirror is crooked in shape, then the forms of physical things are seen other than what they actually are. Also, if the surface of the mirror is rusty, then nothing at all will be seen in it.

So is the state of soul. If it is learned and ignorance is not accumulated in it, if it is pure in substance not defiled by evil deed, if it is clear in its essence [or self] not turbid by vicious character-traits, if its aspiration is sound and has not swerved by corrupted opinions, then it will see in itself the spiritual forms of things which are in its realm. Then it will perceive them by their realities and will witness the matters hidden from its senses by its intellect and purity of its substance, as it witnesses the physical things by its senses if the senses are sound and wholesome.

On the other hand, if the soul is ignorant, impure in [its] substance, defiled by evil acts, or stained by evil character traits, crooked due to base opinions, and persists in that state, then it will remain veiled from perceiving the truths of spiritual things and will be incapable of reaching God the Exalted. [As a consequence,] the blessings of the other world will be missed by it, as God the Exalted said, 'Nay! Most surely they will be veiled from their Lord on that Day' [Qur'ān, 83:15].

Know O brothers—may God assist you and us with a spirit from Him—that the veil [of the soul] from its Lord is its ignorance about its substance, its realm, its origin and return. Its ignorance is due to the stain which has accumulated on its essence from its evil actions and ugly deeds, as the Blessed and Exalted said, 'Nay! Rather, what they used to do has taken possession of their hearts' [Qur'ān, 83:14]. [75] As for its crookedness, that is due to its corrupted opinions and evil character-traits, as God the Exalted said, 'When they deviated, God made their hearts deviate' [Qur'ān, 61:5].

Know O brothers—may God assist you with a spirit from Him—that as long as the soul continues to have these [evil] qualities, it can neither see itself, nor see those beautiful, eminent, delectable, and pleasant things in its essence [or self] which are in its realm as described by God when He said, 'Therein will be what the souls desire and [wherein] the eyes will delight, and you will abide in it forever' [Qur'ān, 43:71], and 'No soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes, a reward for what they did' [Qur'ān, 32:17].

Know O brothers—may God assist you with His Spirit—that so long as the souls do not witness those things, they will not aspire for them, nor will they seek nor yearn for them, and so will remain as if they were blind, as God the Exalted said, 'For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the chests' [Qur'ān, 22:46].

Know O brothers—may God assist you with His Spirit—that if the soul remains blind to matters of its realm, and imagines that its only existence is in this state in which it is at present in this world, then it would be greedy to remain in this world and desire to be here forever. It will be pleased and satisfied [here]. As a

consequence, it would forgo the next world and forget everything concerning the Return as God the Exalted mentioned, 'They are pleased and satisfied with the life of the world' [Qur'ān, 10:7]; and 'They are in despair of the next world as the unbelievers are in despair of those in the graves' [Qur'ān, 60:13]. Then if it is reminded of the divine statement which came through the tongues of His messengers, peace be upon them, nothing is remembered by it, as God the Exalted said, 'And when they are reminded, they remember not' [Qur'ān, 37:13]. So it would remain in its blindness, ignorance, and transgression till death, and would be persistent in arrogance as if it did not hear [God's guidance]. And when comes the inebriety of death, which is the separation of soul from body and abandoning its use, then its separation from it would be with reluctance. It will remain in that state deprived of the use of the body and perception of sensibles. Then it would return to itself in order to advance, but the advancement would not be possible for it due to the weight of the heavy load of its evil deeds and abominable habits, as God the Exalted said, 'They will bear their burdens on their back' [Qur'ān, 6:31]. Then it would be clear to it that the pleasures of the sensible which it enjoyed by means of the body were lost to it, and the pleasures [76] of the intelligibles which were in its realm were not obtained by it. Then it would be clear to it that 'it had lost both this world and the next world, and that is a manifest loss' [Qur'ān, 22:11] which had happened [to it].

The Cultivation of the Soul and Reformation of Character Traits: A Resumé

As for the other trait, it is the 'straight way'. Anyone intending to attain a goal in earthly matters will investigate for his purpose to attain his goal the shortest [possible] way and easiest method. That is because he has learnt that if he does not have the easiest method, then he could be delayed in attaining it, or he could become weary in his method. Now the shortest way is the one which goes straight, and the easiest method is the one in which there are no obstacles.

Similarly, it is also requisite for those whose goal is God the Exalted after purifying their soul, [those] who are craving for the blessings of the next world in the House of Peace and who desire to ascend toward the kingdom of heaven and enter in the company of the angels, that they should investigate the shortest possible way [to attain] their objectives, as God the Exalted said, 'Such have investigated the right guidance' [Qur'ān, 72:14]. And He the Sublime also said, 'This is My straight way, so follow it. Follow not other paths, lest you be parted from His path. This is His directive for you' [Qur'ān, 6:153]. The Exalted one [also] said, 'Say, what if I bring you better guidance than that you found your fathers following?' [Qur'ān, 43:24].

So we would like to clarify what the 'straight way' is that about which He has given His directive through the tongues of His prophets, may peace of God be upon them, and commanded us to follow it. We will also explain how we should tread

on it so that we attain what our Lord has promised, as God the Exalted said, 'We have found that which our Lord promised us to be true. Have you found that which your Lord promised you to be true?' [Qur'ān, 7:44]. However, it is not possible to explain this [matter] effectively except by means of well-measured words, appropriate analogies, and clear proofs like the method of explanation of God the Exalted, and the wont (*sunnah*) of His messengers, may the peace of God be upon them, given in eloquent description of all the signs (*āyāt*) of God on the horizons and in our souls 'until it is evident to them that He is the Real' [Qur'ān, 41:53], as God the Exalted said, 'And in the earth are the signs [of God] for those who have certitude, and in your selves as well. Can you not perceive that?' [Qur'ān, 51:20–21]. When we have done that, the thresholds of treasured knowledge and hidden mysteries will be opened 'which none will touch but those who are pure' [Qur'ān, 56:79].

Know O brothers—may God the Exalted assist you and us with a spirit from Him—that one should not discuss [77] the essence of the Exalted Creator, or His Attributes by the way of speculation and conjecture nor dispute about these [matters] until after the soul has attained purity. Otherwise [such discussions] will lead to doubts, perplexity, and an erroneous [path], as God the Exalted said, 'And among mankind is the one who disputes concerning God without knowledge, without guidance, and without an enlightening Scripture' [Qur'ān, 31:20].

So before anything else, we will begin and explain how we should purify the soul from the evil character traits to which we have become habituated from childhood. For explaining that we shall compose many chapters on the 'discipline' [of the soul], and mention in each chapter many similitudes, so that it becomes most clear in explanation, is understood better, and is more intense in admonition. After that, we shall describe in these epistles other matters in which we shall explain what is the straight way leading toward God the Almighty and Majestic, and how one should follow orderly discourse and clear proofs so that it becomes a direction for those who seek [this] goal, and guidance for those who desire it. Then after these modes we shall begin with unveiling the divine matters which are living and hidden mysteries that we have known by intuition from God the Exalted, through what we have deduced from the exegesis of the Books of His friends, [through] the Revelations of His prophets, peace be upon them, and through what has come from the tongues of the sages in their allusions and symbols.

[These divine matters deal with] the cause of the genesis of the universe from nothing (lit. after it was not), the plight of the soul and its vanity, the creation of the first Adam and his disobedience, the account of the angels and their prostration to Adam, the tree of [paradise] Khuld, the Kingdom which never crumbles, the reason why [God] took the covenant from the progeny of Adam, the reports about the resurrection, the blowing of the trumpet, the awakening and rising [of the dead from the graves], the 'reckoning', the discharging of the Judgment, the crossing over the 'path' (*ṣirāt*), liberation from the [hell-]fire, the entrance into

paradise, the visit of the Lord, the Blessed and Exalted, and similar reports which are mentioned in the Books of the prophets, may peace of God be upon them, as well as the realities of their meanings. For among mankind there are some who are intelligent, discerning and philosophical. When they reflect on these matters and draw analogous conclusion by their reasoning, they [still] cannot conceive their real meanings, and if they take what the literal word of the Revelation indicates, their minds cannot accept that. So they remain in doubt and perplexity, and when the perplexity continues with them for a long time, they deny them by their hearts, though they do not articulate that for fear of being killed.

[78] Also among mankind there are people who are below them in knowledge and discrimination; they believe and know that [those reports] are true. There are others who accept them out of [blind] imitation without reflecting on them, and also there are people who when they hear issues like these, their minds avert them and they feel disgusted at their mention, and they accuse the speaker or the inquirer of them of disbelieving (*kufṛ*) [in the revelation], heresy (*al-zindiqah*) and burdening [oneself with something] not requisite. Those are the people whose souls have been immersed in the slumber of ignorance. So it is incumbent upon the reminder (*mutadhakkir*) that he should become like a gentle physician to them, charming in treating them by being most friendly, [and] according to his capacity give them the reminders through the signs from the Divine Books, the reports of their prophets available to them, and the laws from their *sharāʿi* such as penal laws, prescriptions, and parables. All these are allusions to the soul by means of reminding [it of] what has been neglected by it in the matter pertaining to its origin and return, [they include] the specific number and amount of duties, the prophetic laws according to their known conditions, [and] their execution at the stipulated time, facing toward different directions [in worship], and worshipping in different ways.

If they are the followers of *Tawrāt*, or *Injil*, or the Qurʾān and if their attachment is to the external precepts of their *sharāʿi*, and their craving and interest is in the recitation of the Books of their prophets, and they affirm the truth of what is in them from the prescriptions for the Religion and this world, then this is a proof for the reminders of what they have ignored concerning their world [of the soul], and what they have forgotten concerning their Origin and Return. It is also evidence against them that they had resisted against the meaning of these issues which we have mentioned.

Now, if those people who refuse to know the meanings of these issues are the worshippers of graven images, idols, fire, the sun, stars, and their like, [the reminders should find out if any instruction resembling the *sharāʿi* is available in their traditions] for surely in their Books of laws, the forms of their temples, prescriptions of their traditions there must be similitudes to those [issues] and allusions to something similar in the *sharāʿi* and the religions of the prophets. But the reminders need to know them.

Among people there are some who when they hear the issues like these, the courage of their souls breaks forth to give their responses and they desire to know their meanings. When they hear the response to them, they accept without proof and demonstration, but on the basis of imitation. These are the people whose souls are healthy souls which have not been distorted by corrupted opinions and are not sunk deep in the sleep of ignorance. So the reminder is required to proceed with them gradually in teaching, [79] as we described in the first two epistles which we composed for the students and aspirants. When their souls become cultivated and their minds purified, and their reflections powerful, then they should be given the answers to these issues with demonstrations, as we explained in five epistles which we patterned on the human form, and elucidated their proofs by similitudes which are in the human form.

Among people there are some who are learned. They have inquired into some sciences; they affirm some books of the sages [or philosophers], or they listen to the theologians, and the philosophers and jurists at large in their debates. [They observe that] they speak on similar issues but answer them differently, and do not agree on any one thing, nor is any one opinion correct for them. Rather, disputes and contradictions occur among them [on issues]. Now that is because they do not have one correct principle, nor one straight standard by which to answer all these issues, rather their principles are contradictory and their standards are different and not straight.

Know O brothers—may God assist you and us with a spirit from Him—the answer based on contradictory principles, and judgment based on different standards will be contradictory and incorrect. We have answered all these issues, most of which resemble these issues, on the basis of one principle and one standard, and that is the human form. For the human form is the greatest proof of God for His creation, for it is most near to them. Its proofs are most clear. Its demonstrations are most correct. It is the book which He wrote by His hand; it is the temple which He constructed by His wisdom; it is the scale which He has placed among His creatures; it is the measure by which He will measure them on the Day of Religion [and will recompense them for] what they deserve from Him from reward and retribution; it is the totality in which the forms of both worlds are brought together; it is the sum total of sciences which are in the Guarded Tablet; it is the witness against anyone who struggles [in denying God]; it is the way toward everything good; it is the path stretched between heaven and hell.

So for him who claims leadership in the real sciences and says that it is good to answer these issues mentioned above, it is necessary that the answer sought from him should be based on one principle and one standard. It will not be possible for him [to answer those issues] unless he [chooses] the human form from among the forms of all existent things from the spheres, stars, elements, animal, plant, etc., and makes it [his] principle. If he makes his principle things other than the human

form, then it will not be possible for him to measure the rest of existent things with them and answer these issues as we measure and answer them. If he follows [our way], then everyone will agree upon one opinion, one Religion, one way, and the contradictions will be removed, the truth will become clear to all and that will become a cause for the deliverance of all [from mutual disagreements].

We do not permit anyone to inquire into things of this nature, nor question about them except after the cultivation of his soul, about which we have spoken and [which we have] described in these works, [and in that we] have followed the tradition (*sunnah*) of God, the Blessed and Exalted, about which He gave the report and said, 'And We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and added to them ten' [Qur'ān, 7:142]. That is: Moses, peace be upon him, used to get up [for worship] during the night time, and fast during the day time until his soul (*nafs*) was purified. Then God the Exalted liberated him [from the impurities] during that [period] and spoke to him.

It is reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him and on his progeny, and benediction, said, 'Whoever is pure in serving [or worshipping] God for forty days, God opens his heart, expands his breast and loosens his tongue [to speak] by wisdom though he may be tongue-tied and illiterate (lit. covered, *ghulḥ*)'.

That is why it is incumbent upon the sages who desire to open the gate of wisdom to the students and unveil the secrets [of wisdom] to the aspirants that first and foremost they should discipline them, and cultivate their souls by good manners so that their souls become cleansed and their character-traits (*akhlāq*) purified. For wisdom like the bride desires the 'meeting-place' to be empty because it is from the treasures of the next world. If the sage does not do what is requisite of the wisdom such as disciplining the students prior to unveiling the secrets of wisdom, then his similitude will be like the chamberlain of the king who allows ill-mannered people to go in the presence of the king without [teaching them] good manners and order. If he does so, then surely he would deserve chastisement. But if he does what is requisite in teaching them courtesy, and they do not observe it or accept [his teaching] from him, then the sage is not subject to reproach; rather they should be blamed. That is because if you take the food and drink to the hungry [and thirsty] it would satisfy him. But if he does not eat until he dies of hunger, then he has forcefully taken his life, and 'whoever kills a believer intentionally his recompense is hell, to abide therein [forever], and the wrath of God is upon him' [Qur'ān, 4:93].

[81] May God give you success, O pious and compassionate brother, and us right guidance. May He guide you and us and all our brothers in whatever country they live. Indeed, He is most kind to His servants!

A THEORY ON NUMBERS

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The First Treatise of the Division of Abstract Sciences

Praise to God and peace upon His worshippers whom He has chosen!

Know that it is the method of our noble brothers to study all the sciences of the things which are in this world, be they substances or accidents, tangible or abstract, simple or compound; and to inquire into their principles and the numbers of their species, kinds, and properties, and into their arrangement and order as well as into the process of their originating and growing out of one cause and one origin by one Creator; and to rely, in demonstrating them, on numerical analogies and geometric proofs, similar to what the Pythagoreans used to do. Therefore, we had to put this treatise before all the others, and in it we will mention interesting things belonging to the science of numbers and their properties which is called *Arithmetic*, by way of preface or introduction so that the way may be easier for students to acquire the wisdom which is called philosophy, and its acquisition may be simpler for novices in the study of abstract sciences.

So we say: the beginning of philosophy is the love of the sciences and the middle of it is the knowledge of the true nature of the universe by virtue of human ability, and its end is speech and action which is in accord with knowledge.

The philosophical sciences are of four kinds: the first kind is the abstract sciences, the second is the logical sciences, the third is the natural sciences, and the fourth is the theological sciences. The abstract sciences are of four kinds: the first kind is Arithmetic, the second is Geometry, the third is Astronomy, and the fourth is Music.¹ Music is the knowledge of the composition of sounds and the principles of melodies are derived from it. Astronomy is the science of the stars by means of proofs which are recorded in the book, *Almagest*. Geometry is the science of mensuration by means of proofs which are recorded in the book of Euclid. Arithmetic is the study of the properties of numbers and the qualities of the universe which conform to it, which Pythagoras and Nicomachus recorded. One begins the study of the philosophical sciences with the abstract sciences, and the first of the abstract sciences is the study of the properties of numbers because it is the easiest science to acquire;² then mensuration, (musical) composition, astronomy, the logical sciences, the natural sciences, and finally the theological sciences.

1. Nicomachus, *The Introduction to Arithmetic*, I iii. English translation in M. L. D'Ooge, F. E. Robbins and L. C. Karpinski, *Nicomachus of Gerasa: Introduction to Arithmetic with Studies in Greek Arithmetic* (New York and London, 1926).

2. Nicomachus I iv.

The first thing about which we will speak in the science of numbers is in the nature of an introduction or a preface.

Expressions point to certain meanings, the meanings are the objects of names and the expressions are the names. The most general expression or name is 'thing', and a 'thing' may be one or more than one. *One* is used in two ways: in its proper usage, and in metaphor. In its proper usage it is a thing which can not be partitioned or divided, and everything which can not be divided is one when looked upon from the aspect by which it can not be divided. If you wish, you may say: one is that in which there is nothing but itself, by which it is one.

As for one in metaphor, it is every aggregate which is considered a unity, so for example, ten is called a unit, and a hundred is called a unit and a thousand is called a unit. One is the epitome of oneness as black is the epitome of blackness; and oneness is the quality of being one as blackness is the quality of being black. Plurality is an aggregate of ones, and the first of the plural numbers is two, then three, four, five, and so on, ad infinitum. Plurality is of two kinds, numbers and that which is numbered. The difference between them is that a number is the quantity of forms (*ṣuwar*) of things in the mind of the counter, while that which is numbered are the things themselves.¹

Reckoning is the putting of numbers together and their separation. Numbers are of two kinds, whole numbers and fractions. One, which precedes two, is the source and principle of all numbers, and from it all the numbers are generated both whole and fractional, and they may be reduced to it again.

The whole numbers are generated by argumentation and the fractional numbers by division as follows: when another one is adjoined to one, it is said that they are two; and when another one is adjoined to the two of them, the aggregate is called three; and when another one is adjoined to them, it is called four; and when one is adjoined to them, it is called five. Similarly the whole numbers are generated by increasing them one by one ad infinitum, and this is their table:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9.

Numbers are reduced to one as follows: if one is taken from ten, nine remains; and if one is taken from nine, eight remains; and when one is taken from eight seven remains; and similarly ones are taken away until only one remains. But nothing can be removed from one because (by definition) a part can not be taken from it. So now you understand how the whole numbers are generated from one and how they are reduced to it.

Fractional numbers are obtained from one as follows: the whole numbers are put in their natural order, namely, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine,

1. D'Ooge, Robbins and Karpinski, *Nicomachus of Gerasa*, p. 113.

ten; and one is pointed out from every aggregate. It will be clear how fractions are obtained from one. If one is pointed out from two, it is called a half; and if one is pointed out from three, it is called a third; and if one is pointed out from four, it is called a fourth; and if one is pointed out from five, it is called a fifth; and similarly for a sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth. Moreover, if one is pointed out from eleven, it is called one part in eleven;¹ and from twelve, a half of a sixth; and from thirteen, one part in thirteen; and from fourteen, a half of a seventh; and from fifteen, a third of a fifth; and according to this pattern one may regard the rest of the fractions. So now you understand how the fractional numbers as well as the whole numbers are generated from one and how one is the origin of both of them, and this is their table:

2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
half	third	fourth	fifth	sixth	seventh	eighth	ninth
10	11	12	13	14	15		
tenth	eleventh	twelfth	thirteenth	fourteenth	fifteenth		

Whole numbers are fixed in four ranks: units, tens, hundreds, and thousands. The units are the numbers from one to nine, the tens from ten to ninety, the hundreds from one hundred to nine hundred, and the thousands from one thousand to nine thousand. Twelve single words (in Arabic) suffice for all the numbers, namely, (the numbers) from one to ten, ten words; and one word, hundred; and one word, thousand; so there are twelve single words in all. The other words are derived from these or combined from them or they are a repetition of them. For example, twenty is derived from ten, thirty from three, forty from four, and so on. Combinations such as two hundred, three hundred, four hundred, five hundred, are combinations of a hundred with the unit numbers. And similarly, two thousand, three thousand, and four thousand are combinations of the word thousand with the words for the unit numbers, the tens and the hundreds, so one says: five thousand, seven thousand, twenty thousand, a hundred thousand, etc., and this is their table:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90		
100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900	1,000
2,000	3,000	4,000	5,000	6,000	7,000	8,000	9,000	10,000	
20,000	30,000	40,000	50,000	60,000	70,000	80,000	90,000	100,000	
200,000	300,000	400,000	500,000	600,000	700,000	800,000	900,000		

1. There are no ordinals in Arabic higher than a tenth. In order to compensate for this deficiency, an eleventh is called 'one part in eleven' and a twelfth is called 'a half of a sixth'. In general, if a number has no factors, a fraction of that rank must be called one part in it. If the number does have factors, then one uses a compound name for a fraction of that rank.

The units are 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10; the tens are 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90; the hundreds are 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900; the thousands are 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 6,000 7,000 8,000 9,000 10,000.

The existence of numbers on four ranks, i.e., units, tens, hundreds, and thousands, is not a thing which follows necessarily from the nature of numbers as the existence of even and odd numbers, whole and fractional numbers. But it is a conventional matter which the philosophers have laid down by their own will. They did this so that numbers would conform to the arrangement of natural things, for most natural things were established by the Creator in four orders. For example, there are four natures, heat, cold, dampness, and dryness; four elements, fire, air, water, and earth;¹ four humours, blood, phlegm, and the two biles, yellow bile and black bile; four seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter; four directions and four winds, the east wind, the west wind, the south wind, and the north wind; four cardines, the first house, the seventh house, the tenth house, and the fourth house;² and four sublunar existents, metals, vegetables, animals, and man. Hence one finds that most natural things come in fours.

These natural things come in fours by the intention of the Creator and the exigencies of His wisdom. The categories of natural things conforms the spiritual things which are above natural things and are not corporeal; for things which are above the natural are (also) set in four ranks. The first of them is the Creator; then under Him, Active Universal Intellect;³ then under it, the Universal Soul; and under it, Primary Matter;⁴ and all these are not corporeal.

The relation of the Creator to the universe is like the relationship of the number one (to the other numbers);⁵ and the relation of Universal Intellect to the universe is like the relation of the number two; and the relation of the Soul to the universe is like the relation of the number three; and the relation of Primary Matter to the universe is like the relation of the number four.

1. Nicomachus II i.

2. The four cardines are the rising and setting points of the zodiac, and the upper and lower culminating points of the zodiac. Cf. al-Bīrūnī, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, ed. and tr. R. Ramsay Wright (London, 1934), para. 247.

3. Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* V vii. 'We call Intelligence the image of the One. Let us explain this. It is its image because that which is begotten by the One must possess many of its characteristics and resemble it, as light resembles the sun. But the One is not Intelligence. How then can it produce Intelligence? By its turning towards itself the One has vision. It is this vision which constitutes Intelligence'. *Ennead* V vi. 'The Soul is the Word and a phase of the activity of Intelligence just as Intelligence is the word and a phase of the activity of the One'. According to van den Bergh, 'the Intellect and World Soul stand in Plotinus' system in the relation of Aristotle's active and passive intellect (*De Anima* III v)'. *Averroes' Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (London, 1954), II 13.

4. Primary Matter refers to the Platonic forms and hence is spiritual and not corporeal Cf. F. Dieterici, *Die Philosophie der Araber* (Leipzig, 1875), vol. 1, p. 164.

5. In the arithmology of Nicomachus, as well as other Greeks, the monad was identified with God. D'Ooge, Robbins and Karpinski, *Nicomachus of Gerasa*, p. 104.

Every number has its units, its tens, its hundreds, and its thousands or what exceeds them, *ad infinitum*, and the source of all of them are the numbers from one to four: 1 2 3 4. The rest of the numbers are composed and generated from them, and they are the source of all the numbers. You see this when you add one to four, the total is five; and when you add two to four, the total is six; and when you add three to four, the total is seven; and when you add one and three to four, the total is eight; and when you add two and three to four, the total is nine; and when you add one and two and three to four, the total is ten. This is the rule for the rest of the numbers, the tens, the hundreds, and the thousands and what exceeds them, *ad infinitum*. And similarly the elements of writing are four and the rest of the letters are compounded from them, and words are composed from the letters as we will explain later. Consider it, and you will find what we say true and correct. Let those who wish to know how God invented things in (Universal) Intellect and how He brought things into existence in the Soul and how He formed them in the Primary Matter, consider what we have discussed in this chapter.

The first thing which the Creator invented and innovated from the light of His unity was an extensive substance called Active Intellect, as He made two arise from one, by repetition. Then He made the Universal Soul arise from the light of (Universal) Intellect, as He made three from the adding of one to two. Then He made Primary Matter from the movement of the Soul, as He made four by adding one to three. He then made the rest of the created world from Primary Matter and He arranged it by the intermediary of Intellect and Soul, as He made the rest of the numbers from four by adjoining what precedes it as in the examples above.

When you think about what we have said concerning the composition and the generation of numbers from the number one, you will find it one of the clearest proofs of the uniqueness of the Creator, and the process of His creation and invention of things. For although the existence of numbers, and their composition can be conceived from the number one, as we explained above, nothing essential to it is changed, i.e., that the number one is indivisible. Similarly, although God is the one who created all things from the light of His unity, and made their beginning and made them grow, and they have their existence, duration, completeness, and perfection through Him, nothing essential to Him is changed, i.e., His unity before His act of creation, as we will explain in the treatise concerning the Principles of Reason. We already informed you that the relation of the Creator to the universe is analogous to the relation of the number one to the numbers; as one is the origin of the numbers and that which generates them, their beginning and their end, similarly God is the cause of all things and their Creator, their beginning and their end; and as one can not be divided, nor can it be compared to any other number, so God can not be compared or likened to anything in His creation; and as one encompasses and accounts for all the numbers. So God knows all things and their natures. Hence God is exalted over what the unjust say in grandeur and magnificence.

The orders of the numbers are four according to most people, as we mentioned already, but the Pythagoreans put them in sixteen ranks and this is their table too:¹

Ones	1
Tens	10
Hundreds	100
Thousands	1,000
Ten thousands	10,000
Hundred thousands	100,000
Millions	1,000,000
Ten millions	10,000,000
Hundred millions	100,000,000
Billions	1,000,000,000
Ten billions	10,000,000,000
Hundred billions	100,000,000,000
Trillions	1,000,000,000,000
Ten trillions	10,000,000,000,000
Hundred trillions	100,000,000,000,000
Quadrillions	1,000,000,000,000,000

The fractions have many ranks, because every whole number has one part, two parts, and a number of parts. For example, twelve has a half, a third, a fourth, a sixth, and a twelfth, and similarly twenty-eight, etc. But although the ranks and divisions of fractions are numerous, their scheme is in descending order; each rank is smaller than the previous one. All of them are included in ten words, one word which is general and ambiguous and nine words which are special and fixed. Among the nine words is one word without (etymological) derivation (from its whole number), and that is a *half*, and eight words which are derived: a third (from three), a fourth (from four), a fifth (from five), a sixth (from six), a seventh (from seven), an eighth (from eight), a ninth (from nine), and a tenth (from ten). The word which is general and ambiguous is a 'part' because one in eleven is called a 'part' in eleven, and similarly for thirteen, seventeen, etc. The rest of the expressions for fractions are formed by combining these ten words. For example, one in twelve is called a half of a sixth, and one in fifteen is called a fifth of a third, and one in twenty is called a half of a tenth. The rest of the significations of the fractions are similarly understood as the adjoining of one of them to another.

These two kinds of numbers continue in quantity ad infinitum. Whole numbers start with the smallest quantity, two, and continue to increase without limit.

1. The numbers beginning with 105 are given names which I was unable to identify: *naw'āt*, *ghāyāt*, *sūrāt*, *ḥalbāt*, *al-baṭṭāt*, *haniyāt*, *da'ū'āt*, *wahuwāt*, *majwāt*, *wamūr*, *mārū*.

Fractions begin with the largest quantity, a half, and diminish without limit. So both of them begin at a fixed point, but have no end point to limit them.

Chapter Concerning the Special Properties of Numbers

Every number has one or more special properties meaning the particular qualities of the described object which nothing shares with it. The special property of one is that it is the source of all the numbers as we explained above and it generates¹ all the numbers both odd and even. A special property of two is that it is the first whole number and it generates half of the numbers, the even numbers as opposed to the odd numbers. A special property of three is that it is the first odd number and it generates a third of the numbers, some odd, some even. A special property of four is that it is the first perfect square. A special property of five is that it is the first recurrent number, also called spherical. A special property of six is that it is the first perfect (*tāmm*) number. A special property of seven is that it is the first complete (*kāmil*) number. A special property of eight is that it is the first perfect cube. A special property of nine is that it is the first odd perfect square and it is the last of the rank of units. A special property of ten is that it is the first number of the rank of tens. A special property of eleven is that it is the first deaf number [cf. p. (34)]. A special property of twelve is that it is the first excessive number. And in general, a special property of any number is that it is half the sum of its adjacent number, and if its adjacent numbers are added together, their sum will be twice the given number.² For example, one of the numbers adjacent to five is four and the other is six, their sum is ten and five is half of it, and similarly with the rest of the numbers. And this is their table:

1 2 3 4 -5- 6 7 8 9.

One has only one adjacent number, two; and one is half of it, and it is twice one. We say that one is the source and generator of the numbers because when one is removed from existence all the numbers are removed with it, but when the numbers are removed from existence, one is not removed. We say that two is the first whole number because numbers are a plurality of ones, and the first plurality is two. We say that three is the first odd number because two is the first number and it is even and three being adjacent to it, is odd. We say that it generates a third of the numbers, some odd and some even because it comes after two numbers and can be counted the third from them.³ This third number will sometimes be even and sometimes odd.

1. A number is said to generate all its multiples, and they are generated by it.

2. Nicomachus I viii.

3. Three generates all its multiples, i.e., 3 6 9 12 15 18, etc. One sees that they alternate between odd and even numbers.

We say that four is the first perfect square because it is the product of two multiplied by itself, and any number which is multiplied by itself is a (square) root and the product is a perfect square. We say that five is the first recurrent number because when it is multiplied by itself it returns to itself, and if that number is multiplied by itself, it again returns to its essence and so on forever.¹ So, for example, five times five is twenty-five, and if this number is multiplied by itself, the product is six hundred and twenty-five, and if this number is again multiplied by itself, the product is 390.625, and if this number is multiplied by itself, the product is another number ending in twenty-five. Do you not see how five conserves itself and whatever derives from it eternally, whatever it may reach? And this is their table:

5 25 625 390, 625.

As for six, it is similar to five in this sense, but it is not self-continuing as five is. Its prolongation is 6 36 1296. Six times six is thirty-six; six returns to itself, and thirty appears. When thirty-six is multiplied by itself, the product is 1296; six again appears, but not thirty. So it is evident that six conserves itself but not what is derived from it. But five conserves itself and what derives from it eternally and forever.

It was said that a special property of the number six is that it is the first perfect number, i.e., if the divisors of a number add up to itself, it is called a perfect number, and six is the first of them. Six has a half which is three, and a third which is two, and a sixth which is one, and if these divisors are added up, the sum is equal to six. No number before six has this property, but after it twenty-eight, four hundred and ninety-six, and eight thousand one hundred and twenty-eight are all perfect numbers.

And this is their table:

6 28 496 8,128.

It was said that seven is the first complete number because seven combines in itself the meanings of all the (preceding) numbers. For all the numbers are even or odd, two is the first even number, and four is the second; three is the first odd number and five is the second. If the first odd number is added to the second even number, or the first even number is added to the second odd number, the sum is seven. So, if you add two, the first even number, to five, the second odd number, and the sum is seven; similarly, if you add three which is the first odd number to four which is the second even number, the sum is seven. And if one, which is the source of all numbers, is taken with six which is a perfect number, the sum is seven which is a complete number. This is their table: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7. This is a special property of seven which no other number before seven possesses, and it has other

1. Nicomachus II xvii.

special properties which we will discuss when we discuss the fact that the universe is constructed in accordance with the nature of numbers.

It was said that eight is the first perfect cube because of the following argument. If any number is multiplied by itself, it is called a (square) root and the product of two of them is a perfect square as we explained before. But if the perfect square is multiplied by its (square) root, the product is called a perfect cube. Two is the first number, and if it is multiplied by itself the product is four, which is the first perfect square, then the perfect square is multiplied by its (square) root which is two and the product is eight. Hence eight is the first perfect cube.

Eight is the first *solid* number because there can not be a solid body without interlocked surfaces and there can not be a surface without mutually adjoining lines and there can not be a line without ordered points as we will explain in the treatise on *Geometry*. The shortest line consists of two points and the narrowest surface consists of two lines, and the smallest solid body consists of two surfaces, so the conclusion from these premises is that the smallest solid body has eight parts. One of them is a line which has two parts. If a line is multiplied by itself, they form a surface which has four parts, and if the surface is multiplied by one of its lengths, it will have depth from it, so then there will be eight parts in all, two of length, two of width, and two of depth.

It was said that nine is the first odd perfect square because three times three is nine and neither seven nor five nor three is a perfect square.

Ten is clearly the first number of the tens' rank as one is the first number of the units' rank, and this is clear without the necessity of commentary. It has another special property similar to a property of the number one, namely, that it only has one number adjacent to it, twenty, and ten is half of it as we explained in the case of one which is half of two.

It was said that eleven is the first *deaf* number because it has no fractional part with a name of its own, but a part is called one part in eleven or two parts in eleven. All of the following numbers are called deaf:

11 13 17 23 29 31 37 41 43 47 53 59 61 67 71 73 79 83 89 91.

It was said that twelve is the first *excessive* number, because if the sum of all the divisors of a number are added and are greater than it, it is called an excessive number, and twelve is the first such number. It has a half which is six, and a third which is four, and a fourth which is three, and a sixth which is two, and a twelfth which is one. If these divisors are added up, the total is sixteen which exceeds twelve by four.

So, in general, every whole number has a special property peculiar to itself but we omit their mention as both easy and superfluous.

Numbers are divided into two divisions, whole numbers and fractions as we explained above, and whole numbers are divided into two subdivisions, even

numbers, and odd numbers. An even number is any number which can be divided into two halves which are whole numbers, while an odd number is any number which exceeds an even number by one or which falls short of an even number by one. The generation of even numbers begins from the number two, continuing by repetition without end as is seen:

2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20.

The generation of odd numbers begins from the number one, to which two is adjoined continually, *ad infinitum*:

3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19.

Even numbers are divided into three kinds: powers of two, pairs of odd numbers, and pairs of pairs of odd numbers.¹ Powers of two are all numbers which may be divided into two equal halves of whole numbers which in turn may be so divided, continuing until the process of dividing reaches one. For example, sixty-four: half of it is thirty-two, and half of that is sixteen, and half of that is eight, and half of that is four, and half of that is two, and half of that is one.² And the generation of these numbers begins with two, which is multiplied by two, and the product is multiplied by two, etc., continuing *ad infinitum*.

Whoever wishes to understand this thoroughly, ought to double the squares of the chess-board, because he will always remain within the powers of two, and these numbers have other special properties which Nicomachus explained in his book at length, and we will quote a part of it, He says:³

Let these numbers be set in their natural order, which is one, two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, and so on, *ad infinitum*. One of their special properties is that if one multiplies the two extreme terms, the product will be equal to the mean term multiplied by itself, if there is only one mean term; or if there are two mean terms, the product of the extreme terms is equal to the product of the two mean terms. For example, let 64 be the last term of the series and one the first. This series has one mean term which is eight, so I say: if one is multiplied by sixty-four, or two times thirty-two, or four times sixteen, the product is equals to eight times eight and this is that table:

1 2 4 8 16 32 64.

And if one adds to it another rank so that there will be two mean terms, then I say: if one multiplies the two extreme terms, it will be equal to the product of the two mean

1. Nicomachus I viii.

2. Ibid. This example is used by Nicomachus.

3. Ibid.

terms.¹ For example: if 128 is multiplied by one, or sixty-four by two, or thirty-two by four, the product will be equal to the product of sixteen times eight. And this is their table:

1 2 4 8 16 32 64 128.

These numbers have another special property. If one adds the numbers of the series starting with one and ending arbitrarily, the sum will be one less than the next number of the series. For example, take one, two and four, the sum is smaller than eight by one. And if eight is added to it, the sum is smaller than sixteen by one. And if sixteen is added to it, the sum is smaller than thirty-two by one. Similarly, you discover the ranks of these numbers, however great, and this is their table:

1 2 4 8 16 32 64 128 256.

Pairs of odd numbers are all numbers which can be divided in half once, but do not lead to one by division, such as six, ten, fourteen, twenty-two, twenty-six.² All of these examples are numbers which can be divided once, but do not lead to one. These numbers are obtained by multiplying every odd number by two, and this is their table:

6 10 14 18 22 26 30 34 38 42 46.

Pairs of pairs of odd numbers³ include all numbers which may be divided in half more than once, but do not lead to one by division, such as twelve, twenty, twenty-four, twenty-eight, and similar numbers, and this is their table:⁴

12 20 24 28 36 44 52 60 68.

These numbers are generated by multiplying a pair of odd numbers by two, once or many times. And these numbers have other special properties whose mention we will omit fearing to be redundant.

Odd numbers are divided into subdivisions: prime numbers and composite numbers. Composite numbers are of two kinds, those which are associated with one another, and those which are relatively prime.⁵ The distinction is this: the prime numbers include all numbers, together with one, which are not generated by another number, such as: three, five, seven, eleven, thirteen, seventeen, nineteen, twenty-three. etc. The special

1. Ibid.

2. Nicomachus I ix.

3. Read *al-fard* instead of *wa'l-fard* in the Arabic text.

4. Nicomachus I x.

5. Nicomachus I xi.

property of these numbers is that they have no fractional part other than the one named from them.¹ So, three has no fractional part except a third; five has no fractional part except a fifth, and seven similarly has no fractional part except a seventh; and so on for eleven, thirteen, and seventeen. In general all the deaf numbers can not be generated except by one, and the name of their fractional parts is derived from them.

The composite numbers include all the numbers which are generated by another number, excluding one, such as nine, twenty-five, forty-nine, eighty-one, etc. And this is their table:

9 25 49 81 121 169.

Two numbers are *associated* with one another if both of them are generated by the same number, excluding one. For example, nine, fifteen, and twenty-one are associated because three generates all of them. Similarly, fifteen, twenty-five, and thirty are all generated by five. These numbers and those like them are said to be *associated* by the number which generates them. And this is their table:

9 15 21 25 35.

Two numbers are *relatively prime* if two different numbers other than one generate them, but what generates one of them does not generate the other, such as nine and twenty-five. Three generates nine but does not generate twenty-five, whereas five generates twenty-five, but does not generate nine. So these numbers and others like them are called relatively prime.

Chapter Concerning Perfect, Defective, and Excessive Numbers

Every odd number has the special property that if it is divided into two parts, in any way, one of the parts will be even and the other will be odd; and every even number has the special property that if it is divided in any way, the parts will be either both odd or both even, and this is their table:²

<i>Odd</i>	<i>Even</i>	<i>Even</i>
10 11 1	4 10 4	9 10 1
9 11 2	7 10 7	8 10 2
8 11 3	2 10 2	7 10 3
7 11 4	1 10 1	6 10 4
6 11 5	5 10 5	5 10 5 ³

1. A prime number is a number which has no divisors other than itself and one.
2. Nicomachus I viii.
3. Square brackets are used here to emend the text. The even column in our edition makes

Numbers may be divided into three kinds by considering them from another point of view: perfect, excessive, and defective.¹ A *perfect* number is any number whose divisors add up to itself, such as six, twenty-eight, four hundred and ninety-six, and eight thousand one hundred and twenty-eight. If the divisors of each of these numbers are added up, the sum will be equal to itself. There is only one perfect number in each rank of the numbers: six in the units, twenty-eight in the tens, four hundred and ninety-six in the hundreds, and eight thousand one hundred and twenty-eight in the thousands. This is their table:

6 28 496 8128.

An *excessive* number is any number whose divisors add up to more than itself, such as twelve, twenty, etc. Half of twelve is six, and a third of it is four, and a fourth of it is three, and a sixth of it is two, and a twelfth of it is one: all these divisors add up to sixteen which is more than twelve. A *defective* number is any number whose divisors add up to less than itself, such as four, eight, ten, etc. Half of eight is four, and a fourth of it is two, and an eighth of it is one: the sum of them equals seven which is less than eight. The rest of the defective numbers are of the same kind.

Chapter Concerning Friendly Numbers

From another point of view the numbers may be divided into two subdivisions, one of them called *friendly* numbers. This means any two numbers, one excessive, and one defective such that the sum of the divisors of the excessive number is equal to the defective number and the sum of the divisors of the defective number is equal to the excessive number. For example consider two hundred and twenty which is an excessive number, and two hundred and eighty-four which is a defective number. The sum of the divisors of two hundred and twenty is equal to two hundred and eighty-four, and the sum of the divisors of the latter number is equal to two hundred and twenty. So these numbers and others like them are called *friendly* and there are (only) a few of them. This is their table:

Excessive number	220
Half of it	110
Fourth of it	55
Fifth of it	44
Tenth of it	22
Twentieth of it	11

no sense. Square brackets will also be used to indicate mathematical equations in modern notation.

1. Nicomachus I xiv. ff.

Eleventh of it	20
Twenty-second of it	10
Forty-fourth of it	5
Fifty-fifth of it	4
Hundred tenth of it	2
Two hundred twentieth of it	1
Total	284
Defective number	284
Half of it	142
Fourth of it	71
Seventy-first of it	4
Hundred forty-second of it	2
Two hundred eighty-fourth of it	1
Total	220

Multiplication of Numbers

One of the special properties of numbers is that numbers increase by multiplication and addition without limit. That happens in five ways. Firstly in the natural order: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12, and so on, ad infinitum. Secondly, in the order of even numbers: 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 and so on, ad infinitum. Thirdly, in the order of odd numbers: 1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17, and so on, ad infinitum, fourthly, by subtraction by any of the preceding methods, and fifthly, by multiplication which we will explain later.

Chapter Concerning the Special Properties of the Subdivisions

Each subdivision of the numbers has many properties which have been recorded in the Book of Arithmetic in detail, but we will restate part of it in this chapter.

One of the special properties of the natural order of numbers is that the sum from one to any arbitrary number is equal to the product of one more than the last number multiplied by half of the last number

[i.e., $S = \frac{n}{2} (n + 1)$]. For example, when we say what is the sum of the numbers from one to ten? we add one to ten and multiply it by half of ten and we get fifty-five, or multiply five by itself which is twenty-five. Then we multiply five by the other 'half' which is six [i.e., $11 - 5 = 6$] and we get thirty; the sum is fifty-five, and this is its solution and the pattern which was sought.

The order of even numbers is one, two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve, etc. ad infinitum. One of the properties of this order is that the sum is always odd. Moreover, the

sum of one to any arbitrary number is equal to the product of [half of]¹ this times one more than the other half of this number, adding one to the total. For example, when we say to you: what is the sum of the numbers from one to ten according to the even order; you take half of ten and add one to it, then you multiply it by the other 'half' and add one to the total and that is thirty-one, and similarly for the rest of the numbers.

The order of odd numbers is one, three, five, seven, nine, eleven, etc. *ad infinitum*. One of its properties is that when these numbers are added according to their natural order, there are two (kinds of) sums, one even, and the other odd, one following after the other, continuing *ad infinitum*,² and all of the sums will be perfect squares. Moreover, when they are added according to their natural order from one to any arbitrary number, the sum is equal to half of the last number rounded off to the next whole number and then squared. For example, when we say: what is the sum from one to eleven; its solution is that you take half of the number which is five and a half and round it off to six, then multiply it by itself which equals thirty-six, and that is its solution, so take it as a pattern.

The meaning of multiplication is the duplication of one of the numbers by the number of ones in the other number, as for example, when we say: how much is three times four; its meaning is how much is the sum of three taken four times.

Numbers are of two kinds, whole numbers and fractions as we explained before, and moreover, the multiplication of numbers is of two kinds, simple and compound. Simple multiplication is of three kinds, a whole number by a whole number, like two times three, or three times four, etc. a fraction by a fraction like a half times a third or a third times a fourth, etc. and a whole number times a fraction, like two times a third, or a third times four, etc. Compound multiplication is also of three kinds: a fraction and a whole number times a whole number like two and a third times five, etc.; a whole number and a fraction times a whole number and a fraction like two and a third times three and a fourth etc.; and a whole number and a fraction times a fraction like two and a third times a seventh.

Chapter Concerning Whole Numbers

The Multiplication of whole numbers is of four kinds and there are ten categories for the multiplication of all of them. The four ranks of numbers are units, tens, hundreds, and thousands. The ten categories are: units times units, one of them is one and ten of them are ten; units times tens, one of them is ten and ten of them are a hundred; units times hundreds, one of them is a hundred and ten of them are a thousand; units

1. Emendation based on the example which follows in the text, 'you take half of ten and add one to it, and then you multiply it by the other half... '.

2. The sums are: $1; 1 + 3 = 4; 1 + 3 + 5 = 9; 1 + 3 + 5 + 7 = 16; 1 + 3 + 5 + 7 + 9 = 25$; etc. These sums are all perfect squares and are alternatively odd and even.

times thousands, one of them is a thousand and ten of them are ten thousand; and these are four categories. As for tens times tens, one of them is a hundred and ten of them are a thousand; and tens by hundreds, one of them is a thousand and ten of them are ten thousand; and tens by thousands, one of them is ten thousand and ten of them are a hundred thousand; and these are three categories. And as for hundreds times hundreds, one of them is ten thousand and ten of them are a hundred thousand; and hundreds times thousands; one of them is a hundred thousand and ten of them are a million; and these are two categories. As for thousands times thousands, one of them is a million and ten of them are ten million, and this is one category, so there are ten categories in all and this is their table:

Units times units; units times tens; units times hundreds;
Units times thousands; tens times tens; tens times hundreds;
Tens times thousands; hundreds times hundreds, hundreds times
Thousands; thousands times thousands.

Chapter Concerning Multiplication, Square Roots, and Perfect Cubes

The words which algebraists and geometers employ and their meanings.

So we say: for any two numbers whatever, if one of them is multiplied by the other, the product is called a rectangular number. But if the two numbers are equal the product is called a perfect square and the two numbers are called square roots of this number. For example, if two is multiplied by two, the product is four, or three times three is nine, or four times four is sixteen. Four, nine and sixteen, and similar numbers are all called perfect squares; while two, three, and four are called square roots, so two is the square root of four, three is the square root of nine, and four is the square root of sixteen, and one considers the rest of the perfect squares according to this pattern. The square roots are as follows:

2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	9	16	25	36	49	64	81.

If one multiplies any number by any other number, then the product of them is called a rectangular number which is not a perfect square, and the two different numbers are called its factors and they are called sides of this rectangle, which is the geometric term. For example, two times three, or three times four, or four times five, etc. The product of these numbers which are multiplied is called a rectangle which is not a square.

Chapter Concerning Rectangular Number¹

When any rectangular number, whether a perfect square or not, is multiplied by any number whatever, the product is called a *solid* number, but if the number was a perfect square and it was multiplied by its square root, then the product is called a perfect cube, as for example, if four which is a perfect square is multiplied by two which is its square root, the product is eight; and similarly if nine which is also a perfect square is multiplied by three which is its square root, the product is twenty-seven. And similarly if sixteen which is a perfect square is multiplied by four which is its square root, the product is sixty-four. Hence, eight, twenty-seven, and sixty-four, and similar numbers are called perfect cubes. A *perfect cube* is a solid such that its length, its width, and its depth are equal, and it has six rectangular faces whose sides are equal and perpendicular (to each other); and it has twelve edges, eight solid angles, and twenty-four plane angles.

If a perfect square is multiplied by a number less than its square root, the product is called a *diminished solid number*² which is a solid whose length and width are equal but whose height is less than they are. It has six rectangular faces whose sides are perpendicular; but it has only one pair of opposite faces which are rectangular whose sides are equal and perpendicular and four faces which are elongated [i.e., whose sides are unequal]; twelve edges, every pair of which are parallel; eight solid angles; and twenty-four plane angles. If a perfect square is multiplied by a number greater than its root, the product is called an *augmented solid number*, such as if four which is a perfect square is multiplied by three which is greater than its square root, the product is twelve; similarly, if nine is multiplied by four which is greater than its square root, the product is thirty-six. Hence, twelve, thirty-six, and similar numbers are augmented solid numbers and an augmented solid is one whose height is greater than its length and width. It has six rectangular faces, one pair of opposite faces are rectangles whose sides are equal and perpendicular, and four oblong faces whose sides are parallel and perpendicular. It has twelve edges, every pair of which are equal and parallel; eight solid angles; and twenty-four plane angles.

If any rectangular number which is not a perfect square is multiplied by its shorter side, the product is called a diminished solid; and if it is multiplied by its longer side, the product is called an augmented solid; and if it is multiplied by a number smaller than both of them or greater than both of them, the product is called a *free solid*, as for example if twelve which is a rectangular number not a perfect square, one of its sides being three and the other four, is multiplied by three, the product is thirty-six, which is a diminished solid number; and if it is multiplied by four, the product is forty-eight which is an augmented solid

1. Plane and solid numbers are much more extensively treated in Nicomachus Bk. II.
 2. Literally a brick. Cf. Nicomachus II xvii.

number; and if it is multiplied by a number less than three or more than four it is called a free solid. A free solid is one whose length is greater than its width, and its width is greater than its height. It has six faces, every pair of which are equal and parallel; twelve edges, every pair of which are parallel; eight solid angles and twenty-four plane angles.

Chapter Concerning the Properties of Perfect Squares

We say: if one more than twice its square root is added to a perfect square the sum is a perfect square [i.e., $x^2 + 2x + 1 = (x + 1)^2$].

If a perfect square is diminished by one more than twice its square root, the remainder is a square [i.e., $x^2 - 2x + 1 = (x - 1)^2$].

For every two perfect squares which follow each other: if the square root of one of them is multiplied by the square root of the other and a fourth is added to it the total will be a perfect square. For example: if the square root of four which is two is multiplied by the square root of nine which is three, the product is six, to which is added a fourth, totalling six and a fourth, and its square root two and a half. The product of two and a half times itself is six and a fourth whose square root is two and a half. For every two perfect squares which follow each other: if the square root of one of them is multiplied by the square root of the other, the product is the geometric mean between them and the three numbers are in one proportion. For example, four and nine are perfect squares whose roots are two and three: two times three is six, and four is to six as six is to nine. The other cases follow the same pattern.

Chapter Concerning Problems from the Second Book of Euclid's Elements

Given any two numbers, if one of them is divided into any number of parts, then the product of the two numbers is equal to the product of the one which was not divided, times all the parts of the number which was divided, one part after the other. For example, given ten and fifteen, and let fifteen be divided into three parts: seven, three, and five, then we say:

1. The product of ten times fifteen is equal to the product ten times seven plus ten times three plus ten times five [i.e., the law of distributivity (Euclid, II, 1):
 $a(b + c + d) = ab + ac + ad$].
2. Let any number be divided in parts arbitrarily, then the product of this number by itself is equal to the product of this number times all its parts (Euclid, II 2). For example, let ten be divided into two parts: seven and three, then I say: the product of ten times itself is equal to the product of ten times seven plus ten times three [i.e.

$$(a + b)(a + b) = (a + b)a + (a + b)b;$$

$$\text{or } (3 + 7)(3 + 7) = (3 + 7)3 + (3 + 7)7].$$

3. Let any number be divided into two parts, then we say: the product of this number times one of its parts is equal to the product of this part times itself plus the product of the two parts (Euclid II, 3). For example, let ten be divided into two parts; three and seven, then we say: the product of ten times seven is equal to the product of seven times itself plus three times seven [i.e.,

$$(a + b)b = ab + b^2;$$

$$\text{or } (3 + 7)7 = 3 \cdot 7 + 7^2].$$

4. Let any number be divided into two parts, then we say: the product of this number times itself is equal to the product of each part times itself plus twice the product of the two parts (Euclid II, 4). For example, let ten divided into two parts: seven and three, then we say: the product of ten times itself is equal to the product of seven times itself plus three times itself plus twice seven times three [i.e.,

$$(a + b)^2 = a^2 + b^2 + 2ab;$$

$$\text{or } (7 + 3)^2 = 7^2 + 3^2 + 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 7].$$

5. Let any number be divided in two halves, then in two different parts; the product of one of the different parts times the other, plus half the difference between them multiplied by itself is equal to the product of half of the number times itself (Euclid II, 5). For example, let ten be divided in two halves, then into two unequal parts: three and seven. Now we say: the product of seven times three plus half the difference between them, which is two, times itself is equal to the product of five times itself [i.e.,

$$[(a + b)/2]^2 = ab + [(a - b)/2]^2;$$

$$\text{or } [(3 + 7)/2]^2 = 3 \cdot 7 + [(7 - 3)/2]^2;$$

$$\text{or } 25 = 21 + 4].$$

6. Let any number be divided into two halves, and then add something to it. We say: the product of this number together with its increment times that increment plus half of the number times itself is equal to the product of half of that number together with the increment times itself (Euclid II, 6). For example, let ten be divided in two halves, and then add two to it. We say: the product of twelve times two plus five times itself is equal to the product of two plus five together times itself [i.e.,

$$(x + a)a + (x/2)^2 = [(x/2) + a]^2;$$

$$\text{or } (10 + 2)2 + 5^2 = (5 + 2)^2;$$

$$\text{or } 24 + 25 = 49].$$

7. Let any number be divided into two parts, and then we say: the product of that number times itself plus the product of one of its parts times itself is equal to twice the product of that number times that part plus the product of the other number times itself (Euclid II, 7). For example, let ten be divided into two parts:

seven and three. Then we say: the product of ten times itself plus seven times itself is equal to the product of twice ten times seven plus three times itself [i.e.,

$$(a + b)^2 + b^2 = 2(a + b)b + a^2;$$

$$\text{or } (3 + 7)^2 + 7^2 = 2(3 + 7)7 + 3^2;$$

$$\text{or } 100 + 49 = 140 + 9].$$

8. Let any number be divided into two parts, and then add one of the parts to the original number. We say that the product of all that (the number plus the part) times itself is equal to four times the product of that number times the part plus the other part times itself (Euclid II, 8). For example let ten be divided into two parts: seven and three, then add three to it. Now we say: the product of thirteen times itself is equal to the product of ten times three taken four times plus the product of seven times itself [i.e.

$$(2a + b)^2 = 4(a + b)b + b^2;$$

$$\text{or } (10 + 3)^2 = 4 \cdot 3(10) + 7^2$$

$$\text{or } 169 = 120 + 49].$$

9. Let any number be divided into two unequal parts, then the sum of the product of each of them times itself is double the product of half of that number times itself plus the product of half the difference of what is between the two numbers times itself (Euclid II, 9). For example, let ten be divided into two halves, then into two unequal parts: three and seven. We say that the product of seven times itself plus three times itself is twice the product of five times itself together with the product of two (which is half the difference between the two parts) times itself [i.e.,

$$a^2 + b^2 = 2[(a + b)/2]^2 + 2[(a - b)/2]^2$$

$$7^2 + 3^2 = 2[(7 + 3)/2]^2 + 2[(7 - 3)/2]^2$$

$$49 + 9 = 2 \cdot 25 + 2 \cdot 4$$

$$49 + 9 = 58].$$

10. Let any number be divided into two halves, and then add some increment to it. Now the product of that number with its increment times itself plus the product of the increment times itself is twice the product of half the number with the increment times itself together with the product of half the number times itself (Euclid II, 10). For example, let ten be divided in half, and then add two to it. We say: the product of twelve times itself plus the product of two times itself is twice the product of seven times itself together with the product of five times itself [i.e.,

$$(a + x)^2 + x^2 = 2[(a/2 + x)^2 + (a/2)^2]$$

$$(10 + 2)^2 + 2^2 = 2[(5 + 2)^2 + 5^2]$$

$$144 + 4 = 2(49 + 25)$$

$$148 = 2 \cdot 74].$$

Chapter Concerning the Science of Numbers and its Nature

The philosophers have put the study of the science of numbers before the study of the rest of the abstract sciences, because this science is potentially embedded in everyone and a man ought to reflect (on it) with his reasoning power alone without taking examples from another science, but from it one takes examples for everything else that can be known.

The examples which we expressed in figures in this treatise are for the beginner students whose mental powers are weak, but for those who are sharp-witted, these examples are not necessary.

One of our goals (in writing) this treatise is what we explained in the beginning, and the other goal is to bring attention to the *Science of the Soul* and incitement to the knowledge of its essence. For when the understanding intelligent man studies the science of numbers and reflects upon the quantity of its species, the divisions of its several branches, and the special properties of these several branches, he knows that all of them are accidental and have their being and existence in the soul. So the soul is an essence, because accidents do not have existence other than in essence, and can not exist except through it.

The Goal of the Sciences

The goal of philosophers is the study of the abstract sciences and the training of their students in it. Indeed, it is the path to the natural sciences; the goal of studying the natural sciences is the ascent from it to the theological sciences which are the highest goal of the philosopher and the aim to which they are ascending with true knowledge. The first step of the study of the theological sciences is the knowledge of the essence of the soul, and the search for its source, where it was before its fastening to the body; and inquiry into its life to come, where it will be after its separation from the body, which is called death; and inquiry into the manner of reward for the good people, and how it will be in the world of spirits; and inquiry into the lot of evil doers and how it will be in the other place. Moreover, another quality which men are recommended to acquire is the knowledge of their Lord, and there can be no means of knowing Him except after knowing oneself as God, the Exalted, has said: 'Who forsakes the religion of Abraham but he who is ignorant of himself' (2:124) Meaning he is ignorant of the soul. And as it is said, if one knows himself, he knows his Lord. And it has been said, if he informs you of himself he informs you of his Lord. It is binding on every scholar to study the science of the soul and the knowledge of its essence and its arrangement. God has said: 'And by the soul, and He who fashioned it, and who taught it its sin and its piety, he who keeps it pure will be happy, and he who corrupts it will be disappointed' (91: 7-10). And God said in the story of the

beloved woman in the narrative of Joseph: 'The soul is inclined to evil unless my Lord has had mercy' (12: 53). And God has said: 'As for Him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids his soul from low desires, surely Paradise will be (his) abode' (79: 40–41). And God has said: 'On the Day (of Judgment) every soul will plead for itself' (16: 112). And God has said: 'Oh soul that art at rest: Return to your Lord completely satisfied' (89: 27–28). And God has said: 'God takes the souls at the time of their death and as for those that die not, (he takes them) during their sleep' (39: 43).

Thus there are many verses and proofs in the Qur'ān on the existence of the soul and on its changeable conditions and they are decisive against anyone who denies the existence of the soul.

When those philosophers, who used to discuss the science of the soul before the descent of the Qur'ān, the New Testament, and the Torah, inquired into the science of the soul with the natural talents of their minds, they deduced the knowledge of its essence by the conclusions of their reasoning. This induced them to compose philosophical books which were mentioned previously in this first treatise. But because of extensive discourse in them and their transmission from language to language, one can not understand their meaning or know the goal of their authors. The understanding of the meaning of these books is closed to those who inspect them and the goals of their author trouble those who examine them. We have taken the core of their meaning and the highest goals of their authors and we have presented them as briefly as possible in fifty-two treatises, of which this is the first. The others follow it and you find them according to the order of the numbers.

The treatise is completed, praise to God, Lord of the universe, and may God bless his apostle, Muḥammad the Prophet, and his family who are righteous, and may He surely grant them peace.

MAN AND THE ANIMALS

Reprinted from *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* tr. Lenn Evan Goodman as *The Case of the Animals Versus Man Before the King of the Jinn* (Boston, 1978), pp. 51–77 and 198–202.

Chapter 1

It is said that when the race of Adam began to reproduce and multiply they spread out over the earth, land and sea, mountain and plain, everywhere freely seeking their own ends in security. At first, when they were few, they had lived in fear, hiding from the many wild animals and beasts of prey. They had taken refuge in the mountain-tops and hills, sheltering in caves and eating fruit from trees, vegetables from the ground, and the seeds of plants.¹ They had clothed themselves in tree leaves against the heat and cold and spent the winter where it was warm and summer where it was cool. But then they built cities and villages on the plains and settled there.²

They enslaved such cattle as cows, sheep, and camels, and such beasts as horses, asses, and mules. They hobbled and bridled them and used them for their own purposes—riding, hauling, ploughing, and threshing—wore them out in service, imposing work beyond their powers, and checked them from seeking their own

1. The primal vegetarianism of man is a widespread motif, suggested as early as Genesis. For in Eden, Adam is given to eat 'of every tree,' except of course the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:16–17); and even after his expulsion his provender is construed as 'thorns and thistles' and 'the herb of the field' (Gen. 3:18). But Noah is told that animals may serve as his food (Gen. 9:3). To the ascetically inclined interpreter a collocation of these passages would naturally suggest that human meat eating postdated a vegetarian epoch, and that is what the Ikhwān profess. Taken in context however, the first reference permits fruits of all trees by way of excluding the one forbidden tree. The second refers to conditions of hardship and toil but does not exclude a nonvegetarian diet. The third permits meat eating provided that living flesh should not be consumed, thus presupposing that flesh had been consumed hitherto.

The notion that man's first diet was vegetarian harks back to mythic roots. (For one extended statement, which, like that of the Ikhwān, turns mythlike materials to account as elements in an ethical argument, see Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Animal Food*, II, 5ff.) Levi-Strauss explains the significance of myths regarding human carnivorousness in *The Raw and the Cooked* (trans. John and Doreen Weightmann [New York, 1970]) as relating to the contrast of man's civilized with his hypothetically precivilized state.

2. Natural man presumably was not as vulnerable as civilized man, but also not as dominant. Like other beasts he kept to his own turf and shunned creatures which were likely to be dangerous to him. His efforts at self-protection, however, from the elements and the other species led to enclosure which made him capable of flexibility with regard to habitat. So began human dominance of nature, by man's expropriation of habitats beyond that in which he first was placed on being thrust into nature. Nomadic life is here construed as closer to nature and, as in Ibn Khaldūn, 'closer to being good,' than settled life (see *Muqaddimah*, II, 4, tr. F. Rosenthal [New York, 1958], vol. 1, p. 253); and gathering here seems 'better' and more natural than agriculture. But, unlike Ibn Khaldūn, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' do not explore here the social and economic conditions requisite to the maintenance of any such *modus vivendi*, although such exploration would not be irrelevant to their question regarding man's relations with other species.

ends,¹ where hitherto they had roamed unhindered in the woodlands and wilds, going about as they wished in search of pasture, water, and whatever was beneficial to them.

Other animals escaped such as the wild asses, gazelles, beasts of prey, and wild creatures and birds which once had been tame and lived in peace and quietude in their ancestral lands. They fled the realms of men for far-off wastes, forests, mountain peaks, and glens. But the Adamites set after them with various devices of hunting, trapping and snaring, for mankind firmly believed that the animals were their runaway or rebellious slaves.

Years went by, and Muḥammad² was sent, God bless and keep him and his Household. He called men and *jinn* to God and to Islam. One party of *jinn* answered his call and became good Muslims.³ In the course of time a king arose over the *jinn*, Bīwarāsp the Wise, known as King Heroic.⁴ The seat of his kingdom was an island called Balāsāghūn in the midst of the Green Sea, which lies near the equator.⁵ There the air and soil were good. There were sweet rivers, bubbling springs, ample fields,

1. Like contemporary defenders of animal rights the Ikhwān note the frustration of animals' innate natures and desires as a prime abuse of domestication. Peter Singer notes the inability of hens to form a pecking order in crowded, battery conditions and the unnatural confinement of calves intended for veal (lest grazing and muscular activity impart sinew and iron to their muscle) in stalls too small to allow turning of the head for grooming by the calf's tongue; see 'Down on the Factory Farm', in Peter Singer, ed., *Animal Liberation* (New York, 1975).

Here the fundamental Liberal assumption is placed on its naturalistic basis—that all creatures should be left to do what comes naturally to them, since the natural inclinations naturally lead to what is most wholesome and advantageous for a creature, and thus a life according to unhampered natural inclination is assumed (romantically) to be the best kind of life. See Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*, 8, 15, 25 and *Vatican Fragments*, 21. 52; Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, I, 10 ff.

2. It is relevant to the case the animals will present that the Ikhwān begin from the beginning, that is, like the Arabic universal histories and Washington Irving's history of New Amsterdam (which was facetiously modelled on them), from creation, to establish, for example, the aboriginal natural relations of humans and other animals. But then again, the Ikhwān are anxious to begin their story, and there will be ample opportunities to fill in the relevant historical matter. Hence, from Creation to Muḥammad, the founder of Islam (Ca. 570–632), the Messenger in the Qur'ān, who was born and died in Arabia.

3. The existence of the *jinn*, the demons and sprites of Arabic parlance (cf. Latin *genii*) was taken for granted by popular and traditional Islam; and, according to Islamic doctrine, *jinn* were included in the Muḥammadan dispensation. The Qur'ān (Sūrah 72) tells of a party of *jinn* listening intently to Muḥammad as he received Qur'ānic revelations (which he recited aloud) and then, acknowledging their former error, professing sincere conversion to his faith. According to tradition these then became emissaries to other *jinn*, and so there were many Muslim *jinn*, just as there were both good and evil *jinn*, according to the account the *Jinn* give of themselves: Qur'ān 72:11. (All references to the Qur'ān in this book, will be in this form the Sūrah number followed by the verse number according to the edition of Fluegel [Leipzig, 1883]).

4. Bīwarāsp, the name is Persian.

5. The historic Balāsāghūn was a Soghdian town which figured in the military history of the Qārā-Khāns, et al., but the Ikhwān place their *jinn* realm in a fanciful island in the Green Sea, that is, in the Indian Ocean.

and sheltered resting places, varieties of trees and fruit, lush meadows, herbs, and flowers.¹

Once upon a time in those days storm winds cast up a seagoing ship on the shore of that island. Aboard were men of commerce, industry, and learning as well as others of the human kind. They went out and explored the island, finding it rich in trees and fruit, fresh water, wholesome air, fine soil, vegetables, herbs and plants, all kinds of cereals and grains which the rainfall from heaven made grow. They saw all sorts of animals—beasts, cattle, birds, and beasts of prey—all living in peace and harmony with one another, demure and unafraid.²

These folk liked the place and undertook to settle there. They built structures to live in. Soon they began to interfere with the beasts and cattle, forcing them into service, riding them, and loading them with burdens as in their former lands. But these beasts and cattle balked and fled. The men pursued and hunted them, using all manner of devices to take them, firmly convinced that the animals were their runaway and recalcitrant slaves. When the cattle and beasts learned that this was their belief, their spokesmen and leaders gathered and came to set their complaint before Bīwarāsp the Wise, King of the *jinn*. The King accordingly sent a messenger to summon those persons to his court.

A group from the ship, about seventy men of diverse lands, answered the summons. When their arrival was announced, the King ordered that they be welcomed with decorum and shown to their lodgings. After three days he brought them into his council chamber. Bīwarāsp was a wise, just, and noble king, openhanded and open-minded, hospitable to guests, and a refuge to strangers. He had mercy for the afflicted and did not allow injustice. He ordained what was good and would not tolerate what was evil but interdicted all wrong doing. His sole hope in all this was to please God and enjoy His favour.³ When the men came before him and saw him on his royal throne, they hailed him with wishes of long life and well-being. Then the King asked through his interpreter, 'What brought you to our island? Why did you come uninvited to our land?'

1. The Ikhwān mention carefully the natural resources which made this island a favoured spot for animal or human habitation. They observe the same practice with regard to other lands as well. No habitat is regarded unfavourably; even most extreme environments contain features which are beneficial or necessary to their denizens.

2. The Ikhwān propose that predation and even competition among animals are attributable either directly or indirectly to the acts of humans.

3. Bīwarāsp is painted as a model king—a princely mirror of the sort whom Muslim jurists held up to actual kings as an ideal. He combines the Platonic kingly virtue of justice with the traditional Middle Eastern virtues of magnanimity, liberality, and compassion. The obligation to command what is decent and interdict what is indecent is Qur'ānic (see 9:68), and serves as the thematic basis for all Islamic public policy, since it is taken to mean that there is a general (that is, societal, hence specifically leader-directed) obligation to institute what is right and good and to restrict institutionally what is wrong or bad—thus, in effect, to legislate moral standards through public policy and juridical practice.

One of the humans answered, 'We were drawn here by all we have heard of the merit of the king, his many virtues—goodness, nobility of character, justice, and impartiality in judgment. We have come before him that he might hear our arguments and the proofs we shall present, and judge between us and these escaped slaves of ours who deny our authority, for God upholds the righteous cause and will render right triumphant.'

'Speak as you wish,' said the King, 'only make clear what you say.'

'I shall, your Majesty,' the human spokesman answered. 'These cattle, beasts of prey, and wild creatures—all animals in fact—are our slaves, and we are their masters. Some have revolted and escaped, while others obey with reluctance and scorn servitude.'

The King replied to the human, 'What evidence and proof have you to substantiate your claims?'

'Your Majesty,' said the human, 'we have both traditional religious evidence and rational proofs for what I have said.'

'Let us have them,' said the King.

Then a spokesman of the humans, an orator, descended from 'Abbās,¹ God's grace upon him, rose, mounted the witness stand, and said, 'Praise be to God, Sovereign of the universe, hope of those who fear Him and foe to none but the unjust. God bless Muḥammad, seal of the prophets,² chief of God's messengers and intercessor on the Day of Judgment. God bless the cherubim, His upright servants, all who live in heaven and earth who are faithful, and all Muslims. May He in His mercy place you and us among them, for He is the Most Merciful.

1. 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim was the uncle of Muḥammad. Since the Prophet of Islam was not survived by any male issue, 'Abbasid or Hāshimite descent figured prominently in the legitimist claims which continued to be made throughout the centuries after his death. And the dynasty which established itself in 750, founded Baghdad, and continued to rule (or reign) over much of the Middle East (including the Baṣra of the Ikhwān) until 1258, traced their descent to 'Abbās.

The Būyid dynasty, exercising hegemony over Iraq from their Persian capital in Shīrāz (945–1053) relegated the 'Abbasid *khalīfs* to a titular/ritual role, to the extent that they were able. This division of authority gave scope to the Ikhwān for harsh criticism of the 'Abbasids in the present *risālah* but nowhere in its pages (do they) explicitly propagandize in behalf of the (Shi'i) Būyids.

2. Popularly understood, 'seal of the prophets,' as an epithet of Muḥammad is thought to designate the finality of the Muḥammadan dispensation. But as Ilse Lichtenstadter points out, the Qur'ān itself refers to Muḥammad simply by name or as God's messenger; the term 'seal of the prophets' (33:40), she writes, expressed 'only his conviction that he affirmed, through his revelation the veracity of earlier 'messages' brought by his prophetic predecessors; he joined their ranks, carrying on their work and projecting it into the future by confirming, as the seal does for a document, the eternal truth it conveys'. This original and insightful gloss, Lichtenstadter hastens to add, sheds light on the Aḥmadiyyah sect, a modernist movement born in the Indian subcontinent. See Ilse Lichtenstadter, *Introduction to Classical Arabic Literature* (New York, 1974), pp. 47, 52.

'Praised be God who formed man from water and his mate from man, multiplied their race and lineage, mankind and womankind, gave honour to their seed and dominion over land and sea, and gave them all good things for their sustenance, saying, "Cattle He created for you, whence you have warmth and many benefits. You eat of them and find them fair when you bring them home to rest or drive them out to pasture."¹ He also said, "You are carried upon them and upon ships,"² and, "horses, mules, and asses for riding and for splendour."³ He also said, "so that you might be mounted upon their backs and remember the goodness of your Lord."⁴ And there are many other verses in the Qur'ān and in the Torah and Gospels which show that they were created for us, for our sake and are our slaves and we their masters. God grant pardon to you and to me.'

'Cattle and beasts', said the King, 'you have heard the verses of Qur'ān this human has cited as evidence for his claims. What say you to this?'

At that the spokesman for the beasts, a mule, got up and said,⁵ 'Praise be to God,

1. Qur'ān 16:5–6. The warmth referred to is the fabric made of the cattle's hair, whence clothing and shelters may be made. Verse 7 continues: 'They bear your loads to lands you could not reach without great hardships. Indeed your Lord is clement and compassionate.'

2. Qur'ān 23:22; cf. verse 21, 'In truth there is a lesson for you in the cattle. We (namely, God) give you sup from what is in their bellies, and you have many benefits from them, and of them you eat.'

3. Qur'ān 16:8; cf. the sequel, verses 10–16. 'He it is who sends down water from the sky for you, from Him, as drink, whence there are trees on which your flocks may feed. And with it He causes crops to grow for you—olive and date trees, and grape vines, each with its fruit. Truly in that there is a sign for thoughtful folk. He put the night and day in your service, the sun, moon, and stars, subservient to His command. In this truly there are signs for discerning folk...'. He it is who subjected the sea to you, that you might eat moist flesh from it and bring forth ornaments from it to wear, and that you may see ships cleaving it ... and pitched towering mountains on the earth that it may hold fast by you; rivers and passages that you might perhaps find your way, and landmarks—and by the stars are they guided...'. The syntax of this inspirational passage may be somewhat sprung, but the meaning is clear, that God's grace is manifest in the adaptation of nature to human needs. This may be read as presuming that nature was designed to serve man's needs or more strongly, that sun, moon, stars, sea, rivers, mountains, passes, night, and day exist solely for man's sake. But neither anthropocentric reading strictly is implied. As in Biblical usage, the Qur'ān may be expressing a result as a purpose (since all results are regarded as foreseen), and the 'subordination' of nature to man may express simply the fact that he benefits from it, not necessarily that he is its lord. The central import remains undisturbed, for even a casual beneficiary of God's grace in nature ought to feel the gratitude and the sense of a planned order which Muḥammad calls for from the 'discerning'. Thus the anthropocentric overtones of the passages the human cites are not essential to the Qur'ānic message, and the Ikhwān can confidently abstract from them and not feel bound by them in their inquiry.

4. Qur'ān 43:12. Ships, it is true, are man-made, not an aboriginal feature of nature. But the presence on earth of seas and navigable waterways is regarded by Muḥammad (as in the passage cited in note 15) as an act of grace, in part because it makes possible the ease of water-borne transport.

5. Like any proper formal discourse the mule's remarks open with the *khuṭbah* or preface in praise of God. The *khuṭbahs* found in writings where thematic exposition plays a major role are actual introductions which set the tone and foreshadow the themes of what will follow. Since the mule intends to deal with the rights and wrongs of animal-human relations, his *khuṭbah* harks back to the creation at which the divine law was first imposed upon nature. This forms a ground-

One, Unique and Alone, Changeless, Ever-abiding and Eternal, who was before all beings, beyond time and space and then said, "BE!"—at which there was a burst of light He made shine forth from His hidden Fastness. From this light He created a blazing fire and a surging sea of waves. From fire and water He created spheres studded with stars and constellations, and the blazing lamp of the heavens. He built the sky, made wide the earth and made firm the mountains. He made the many storeyed heavens, dwelling place of the archangels; the spaces between the spheres, dwellings of the cherubim. The earth he gave to living things, animals, and plants. He created the *jinn* out of the fiery simoom and humans out of clay. He gave man posterity "from vile water in a vessel sure",¹ allowed man's seed to succeed one another on earth, to inhabit it, not to lay it waste, to care for the animals and profit by them, but not to mistreat or oppress them. God grant pardon to you and to me.'

'Your Majesty', the mule continued, 'there is nothing in the verses this human has cited to substantiate his claims that they are masters and we slaves. These verses point only to the kindness and blessings which God vouchsafed to mankind, for God said that He made them your servants just as he made the sun, the moon, the wind and clouds your servants. Are we to think, Your Majesty, that these too are their slaves and chattels and those men are their masters? No! God created all His creatures on heaven and earth. He let some serve others either to do them some good or to prevent some evil. God's subordination of animals to man is solely to help men and keep them from harm (as we shall show in another chapter) not, as they deludedly suppose and calumniously claim, in order that they should be our masters and we their slaves.'²

'Your Majesty', the spokesman of the beasts continued, 'we and our fathers were inhabitants of the earth before the creation of Adam, forefather of the human race. We lived in the countryside and roamed the country trails. Our bands went to and fro in God's country seeking sustenance and caring for themselves. Each one of us tended to his own affairs, kept to the place best suited to his needs—moor, forest, mountain, or plain. Each kind saw to its own. We were fully occupied in caring for our broods and rearing our young with all the good food and water God had allotted us, secure and unmolested in our own lands. Night and day we praised and sanctified God, and God alone.'³

work for claims as to the divine intention regarding the relations of the species, and many of the subsequent speakers, animal and human, follow the mule's example. The manner in which the Biblical conception of cosmic time and universal history casts its spell over Islamic imagination is very evident in these little introductions.

1. See 23:13, 77:20–21, 32:7, etc. Note that even the heavens for the Ikhwān are divided into diverse habitats each with its own proper denizens.

2. God has blessed mankind through the animals, it is conceded. But the scriptural passages imply no more—not that man is sovereign over nature nor that was it created for his sake. For the same usages are applied to the heavenly bodies, which in medieval usage were regarded as superior to man in the 'great chain of being' and, therefore, could not rationally be spoken of as subordinate to human use in any sense, which implied an inferior rank or ontic dignity.

3. The animals observed the laws of nature, and this constituted their constant 'praise' of God.

'Ages passed and God created Adam, father of mankind, and made him His vice-regent on earth. His offspring reproduced, and his seed multiplied. They spread over the earth—land and sea, mountain and plain. Men encroached on our ancestral lands. They captured sheep, cows, horses, mules, and asses from among us and enslaved them, subjecting them to the exhausting toil and drudgery of hauling, being ridden, ploughing, drawing water, and turning mills. They forced us to these things under duress, with beatings, bludgeonings, and every kind of torture and chastisement our whole lives long. Some of us fled to deserts, wastelands, or mountaintops, but the Adamites pressed after us, hunting us with every kind of wile and device. Whoever fell into their hands was yoked, haltered, and fettered. They slaughtered and flayed him, ripped open his belly, cut off his limbs and broke his bones, tore out his eyes; plucked his feathers or sheared his hair or fleece, and put him onto the fire to be cooked, or on the spit to be roasted, or subjected him to even more dire tortures, whose full extent is beyond description.¹ Despite these cruelties, these sons of Adam are not through with us but must claim that this is their inviolable right, that they are our masters and we are their slaves, deeming any of us who escapes a fugitive, rebel, shirker of duty—all with no proof or explanation beyond main force.²

Chapter 2

When the King heard this, he ordered a herald to carry the news throughout the kingdom and summon vassals and followers from all tribes of the *jinn*—judges, justices, and jurisconsults. Then he sat down to judge between the spokesmen for

Each kept to its own habitat and followed the pattern of life which God had laid out for it. The laissez-faire ideal of each (species) caring for its own and not molesting others is here directed pointedly at the humans, who are familiar with this ideal but whose very existence upon earth is predicated on breaching that ideal. The romantic ideal of peace assumes this kind of absolute noninterference—which Isaiah uses to symbolize universal peace among nations—but, as commonly happens with expressions of romantic dissatisfaction and other rhetorical forms of protest, a relative distinction (in this case that between man's widespread exploitative activities and the more confined and limited exploitativeness of the animals) is painted as an absolute distinction, as though humans alone exploited nature and other species and the animals did no such thing.

The animal spokesman pleads the priority of animals to humans as legitimating the independence and self-direction of the beasts. He does not then presuppose the 'dogma of simultaneous creation'.

1. The animals make full use of graphic description of their abuse at the hands of men for the sake of the emotive response elicited by the frisson these descriptions evoke.

2. A moral outrage is added to the physical outrage of the violation of animals' liberties and lives by the claimed legitimacy of these procedures, although force is the only legitimating factor, since it is manifest that no element of choice could be invoked on the part of the beasts, were choice to be accorded them. Here the Ikhwān rely upon the notion of virtual subjecthood to secure this conclusion, as they do in their emotive passages to secure empathy. There is a further irony in the human claim of an inviolable right over the animals. For, to the Ikhwān, no natural state is permanent and thus, no claimed right is inviolable.

the animals and the advocates of men. First he addressed the leaders of the humans: 'What have you to say of the injustice, oppression and usurpation with which you are charged by these beasts and cattle?'

'They are our slaves,' said the human representative, 'we are their owners. It is for us as their lords, to judge them, for to obey us is to obey God, and he who rebels against us is transgressing against God.'¹

The King replied, 'Only claims which are grounded in definite proof are acceptable before this court. What proof have you of your claims?'

'We have philosophical arguments and rational proofs'² in support of the soundness of our claims,' said the human.

'What are they? Will you present them?' asked the King.

'Certainly,' the man said. 'Our beautiful form, the erect construction of our bodies, our upright carriage, our keen senses, the subtlety of our discrimination, our keen minds and superior intellects all indicate that we are masters and they slaves to us.'

The King turned to the spokesman of the beasts. 'What have you to say to the evidence he has introduced?'

'There is nothing in what he says to prove what the human claims.'

'Are not standing upright and sitting straight the qualities of kings and bent backs and lowered heads the attributes of slaves?' asked the King.

'God assist Your Majesty to the truth,' the animal spokesman replied. 'Heed what I say and you shall know that God did not create them in this form or shape them in this way to show that they are masters. Nor did He create us in the form we have to show that we are slaves. Rather He knew and wisely ordained that their form is better for them and ours for us. Since God created Adam and his children naked

1. A similar claim was made by Muslim rulers, and the satiric impact of this parallel would not have been lost on the audience of the *Ikhwān*.

2. The traditional/religious arguments have already been shown to be unavailing to the human claim. The reader should bear in mind, however, the distinction between religion, which is an institution, and theology, which is a branch of thought. Theological claims may still be adduced, but they must be based on reason, that is, they must represent natural (as opposed to scriptural) theology. Scripture, as has been shown already, assigns no absolute ascendancy to man over the animals and thus, no traditional religious argument can be created in behalf of such a claim. The task devolves on reason.

Reason and religion (that is, the traditional elaboration of revelation as preserved in scripture) are here accorded parallel roles. 'Orthodox' thinkers in Islamic jurisprudence were to argue that reliance upon 'reason' as a means of interpreting the divine law leads inevitably to the introduction of subjective notions with the interpretation. But such orthodoxy did not exist in the earliest phases of the development of Islamic jurisprudence but arose as a developed school of traditionalism in response to what were felt to be the freewheeling tendencies of earlier, more rationalistic speculation. The *Ikhwān*, in any case, not being orthodox and indeed belonging to a period at which traditionalistic orthodoxy had by no means come to maturity, felt no compunction in not subordinating rational arguments to tradition, as later and more orthodox thinkers were expected to do.

and unshod, without feathers, fleece, or wool on their skin to protect them against heat and cold, since He gave them fruit from trees as their food and leaves of trees for their clothing, and since the trees stood upright, spreading up into the air, He made man stand erect so it would be easy for him to reach the fruit and leaves. By the same token, since He gave us the grass on the ground for our food, He made us face downward so it would be easy for us to reach it.¹ This, not what he alleged, is the reason God made them erect and us bent downward.'

'What then do you say of God's worth, "We formed man at the fairest height"?'² asked the King.

The spokesman replied, 'The heavenly books have interpretations which go beyond the literal and are known by those whose knowledge is deep.³ Let the King inquire of scholars who know and understand the Qur'ān.'

So the King asked the learned sage, 'What is the meaning of "the fairest height"?''

'The day God created Adam,' he replied, 'the stars were at their zeniths, the points of the signs of the zodiac were solid and square, the season was equable and matter was prepared to receive form. Thus his body was given the finest form and the most perfect constitution.'

'This would suffice to give a ground for their boasts of honour and excellence,' said the King.

The wise *jinni* said, "'At the fairest height' has another meaning in the light of God's words, "who created, fashioned, and proportioned you as He pleased".⁴ This means, He made you neither tall and thin nor short and squat but at a mean.'

1. Ecological considerations, specifically the adaptation of each species to its eco-niche, not any inherent beauty or intrinsic merit are the basis of human form, as of the forms of all species.

2. Qur'ān 95:4.

3. The Qur'ān itself (3:5) alludes to those whose knowledge is deep (*al-rāsikhūn fi'l-'ilm*): 'He it is who has sent down to you this Book in which is sure verses, which is the substance of the book, and others which are unclear. Those who have unsteadiness in their hearts pursue its uncertainties, eager for strife and eager to explain them. But none but God knows the interpretations. And those who are deeply rooted in understanding [*al-rāsikhūn fi'l-'ilm*] say 'We believe in it. All is from our Lord'. Yet none can heed it but those with hearts to understand'. While this passage seems directly to admonish Muḥammad's hearers not to endeavour to interpret the Qur'ān, the internal admission that the Muslim scripture contains problematic verses was taken as an invitation to allegorical interpretation by subsequent generations, and 'those whose knowledge was deep' became the designation of the class of investigators who were likely to interpret these correctly in view of the Qur'ānic grouping of persons so described with the faithful among those destined for a divine reward (4:160).

4. Qur'ān 82:7–8. These verses were a subject for speculation perhaps because they seem to suggest (if taken literally) that God physically handled Adam's clay. The great Muslim theologian al-Ghazzālī (1058–1111) wrote a commentary on these words, and Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185) returned to them as well in his *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, tr. L. E. Goodman (New York, 1972)—in view of the possibility they afforded for a discussion of the interaction of matter and spirit. But the Ikhwān read the passage as referring to the modulation of form to function in all animal species.

The spokesman for the animals said, 'He did the same for us. He did not make us tall and thin, nor short and squat, but in due proportion. So we share equally with them in this.'

'How is it that animals are so well proportioned and so evenly formed?' the human asked. 'We see that the camel has a massive body, long neck, small ears, and a short tail; the elephant, an enormous bulk, great tusks, broad ears, and tiny eyes. The cow and buffalo have long tails and thick horns, but no tusks. Rams have two big horns and a thick tail, but no beard; goats have a fine beard, but no fat tail, so their private parts are exposed. Rabbits have a small body but big ears, and so it goes. Most animals—wild beasts, beasts of prey, birds, and crawling creatures—are irregularly built and misproportioned.'

'On the contrary, O human,' said the animal spokesman, 'you have missed the beauty and wisdom of their creation. Do you not realize that a slight to the work is a slight to its Maker? You must start with the knowledge that all animals are the work of the wise Creator, who made them as He did with reason and purpose, for their own good and protection from harm.¹ But this is understood only by Him and by those whose knowledge is deep.'

'Tell us and inform us then,' said the human, 'if you are the scholar and speaker of the beasts, why does the camel have such a long neck?'

'To match his long legs,' he replied, 'so that he can reach the grass on the ground, to help himself rise with a load, and so that he can reach all parts of his body with his lip to scratch and rub them. The elephant's trunk takes the place of a long neck. His large ears serve to shoo flies and gnats from the corners of his eyes and mouth—for his mouth is always open, he cannot close it fully because of his protruding tusks. But his tusks are his defence against predators. The rabbit's large ears provide cover, a blanket in winter and a shade in summer; for his skin is tender and his body, delicate. And so we find that God made the parts, limbs, and organs of every species adapted to its needs in seeking the beneficial and shunning the harmful. This is the idea to which Moses alluded (peace be upon

1. The investigator must work on the assumption of the wisdom of creation. Just as scientists assume the universal operation of efficient causality and seek causes when they do not find them, not stopping at each juncture to inquire, where evidence fails, whether here the rule of causality has petered out, so biologists must presume the universality of functional causality, that is, of teleology, that form serves function. The assumption is not arbitrary but educated by experience and rewarded as a heuristic device—but it does go beyond whatever evidence we have, as it must if it is to be used heuristically. The *a priori* assumption of causality being universal has, of course, been called into question in some interpretations of the findings associated with quantum phenomena, and the relevancy of teleology in biology has also been questioned. In both cases the critique, like the assumption which it criticizes, stands on metaphysical ground. There is no evidence for the rejection of universal causality (or teleology) just as there can be no evidence in its behalf. But its heuristic value, or, as Kant would have it, its role as a regulative idea, remains intact. Nature would be unintelligible without the assumption of universal causality, and biology would be impossible without teleology.

him) when he said, "Our Lord who gave its nature to every thing and guided all things".¹

'As for your boasts of the beauty of your own form, there is nothing in that to support your claim that you are masters and we slaves. For beauty of form is only what is desired in the male and female of each species that attracts them to one another to mate, copulate, and produce offspring and progeny for the survival of the species. Thus beauty of form is different in every species. Our males are not aroused by the beauty of your females, nor our females by the charms of your males, just as blacks are not attracted by the charms of whites nor whites by those of blacks, and just as boy-lovers have no passion for the charms of girls and wenchers have no desire for boys.² So, Mr. Human Being, you have no grounds for boasting of superior beauty.'

Chapter 3

'Your vaunted powers of perception and fine discrimination are not unique, for there are animals with finer senses and more precise discrimination. The camel, for example, despite his long legs and neck and the elevation of his head in the air, finds his footing along the most arduous and treacherous pathways in the dark of night, which you could not make out and not one of you could see without a lantern, torch, or candle. The horse too sees in the dark, or at least he hears distant footsteps in the dead of night and often wakes his master from sleep by nudging him with a foot to warn him of an enemy or beast of prey. An ass or cow is frequently observed to return to its familiar home when its master has led it away on a path it did not know and left it. Yet there are men who may travel the same road any number of times and still stray from it and lose themselves. In a flock of sheep and ewes a great number may give birth in a single night and then be driven out to pasture early in the morning not to return until nightfall. Even so it is observed that when the young, a hundred or more, are released each goes to its dam, without any doubt on the part of the mother or confusion on the part of the young. With humans a month

1. Qur'ān 20:52. Here both form and (ethological) function are ascribed to the act of God. The former is the product of creation; the latter, the object of divine guidance.

2. Since form is relative to function, physical beauty must be a subjective matter accountable only to the adaptive needs of the species and not expressive of any objective status in the ontic chain. This is a corollary of the (Qur'ānic, not Darwinian) principle of adaptation which the Ikhwān apply. They offer evidence for the subjectivity of the sense of beauty from the alleged variations in standards of attractiveness from people to people and within peoples among individuals of divergent sexual orientations. This does not imply that the animal spokesman believes blacks and whites to be of different species. Any variation of taste would have served in his argument. He might have argued that males in general are attracted to females and vice-versa, but the example of homosexual versus heterosexual orientation apparently seemed a clearer cut case, and the alleged racial difference of tastes was intended to heighten the sense of subjectivity in regard to this area of valuation. For a discussion of Islamic views on race, see Bernard Lewis, *Race and Color in Islam* (New York, 1971).

or two or more must pass before they can distinguish their own mother from their sister, or their father from their brother. Where then are the superior senses and fine discrimination which you boast of against us?

‘As for the alleged superiority of your intellects—why we find not the slightest trace or sign of it, for if you had such overwhelming minds you would not have boasted against us of things which are neither your own doing nor acquired by your own efforts, but are among the manifold gifts of God, to be recognized and given thanks for as acts of grace. The intelligent take pride only in things which are their own doing, sound arts and industries, sound views, true sciences, upright conduct, just practices, ways pleasing to God.¹ As far as we can see you have no superiority to boast of, but only unfounded claims, unwarranted allegations, and groundless contentiousness.’

Chapter 4

The King then said to the human, ‘You have heard their reply. Do you have anything to add?’

‘Yes, Your Majesty,’ he said. ‘There is further evidence that we are their masters and they our slaves. We buy and sell them, give them their feed and water, clothe and shelter them from heat and cold. We protect them from beasts of prey which would tear them to pieces, treat their illnesses and care for them when they are sick or diseased, teach them when they know nothing, put up with them when they are mad, put them out to pasture when they are spent. All this we do out of kindness and compassion for them, but these are things masters do for their servants and owners for their property.’

‘You have heard his assertion,’ said the King, ‘answer as you see fit.’

The spokesman of the beasts replied, ‘He argues that they buy and sell us. The same is done by Persians to Greeks and Greeks to Persians when they conquer one another. Which is the slave and which the master? The Indians treat the Sindians the same way, and the Sindians the Indians; the Abyssinians, the Nubians, and the Nubians, the Abyssinians. The Arabs, Turks, and Kurds behave the same

1. The animals here adopt the Stoic axiom that one is accountable only for that over which one has control. For the Stoics the realm of guaranteed control extended only to the inclination of the will, and they therefore argued that only in regard to intentions could a person be praised or blamed. Kant similarly held that the only thing which is unqualifiedly good is a good will. The animal spokesman here, however, proposes a wider possible sphere of moral accountability and hence of moral pride. There are arts, industries, sciences and views, actions and practices for which an individual may claim responsibility. This voluntarism may seem incompatible with the general doctrine of God’s responsibility for all things including arts and industries and even the inclination of the will itself, but the Ikhwān do not seem to be preoccupied with the possibility of such a contradiction. They do not seem to regard the notion that arts, sciences, and even the inclination of the will are gifts of God as incompatible with the assignment of human responsibility for these.

way toward one another. Which of them, pray, are really the slaves and which the masters? Are these not, O just King, simply the turns of human fortune with the changing influence of the stars and conjunctions of the constellations? As God Himself said, "These are but the days whose revolutions I bring about among men"—and no one understands this but the learned.¹

As for his statement that they feed and water us, and all the rest he mentioned that they do for us, these things are done not out of kindness or compassion as he claims but out of fear that we might die and they lose their investment in us and the benefits they derive from us, the opportunity to drink our milk, wear our fleece or wool or fur, ride on our backs, and have us carry their burdens.'

Then the ass spoke up and said, 'Your Majesty, had you seen us as prisoners of the sons of Adam, our backs laden with rocks, bricks, earth, wood, iron, and other heavy loads, struggling and striving to carry them while they stood over us with sticks in their hands to beat us brutally about the face and back in anger, you would have pitied us and shed tears of sorrow for us, merciful King. Where then are their mercy and compassion?'

The ram said, 'You would have pitied us, your Majesty, if you had seen us as their prisoners, when they seized the smallest kids and lambs and separated them from their dams to preempt our milk, cook our young and bound them hand and foot to be slaughtered and skinned, hungry, thirsty, bleating for mercy but not pitied, screaming for help with no one to aid them. We saw them slaughtered, skinned, dismembered, their entrails torn out, their heads, marrow bones, and livers on the butchers' blocks, to be cut up with great knives and boiled in cauldrons or roasted on a spit in an oven while we kept silent, not weeping or complaining, for even if we had wept they would not have pitied us. Where then is their mercy?'

The camel joined in, 'Also had you seen us, your Majesty, as prisoners in the hands of the Adamites, our noses bound up with rope and our halters in the hands of drivers who forced us to carry heavy loads and make our way in the dead of night through dark defiles and waterless plains over a rocky track, bumping into boulders

1. Qur'ān 3:134. The verse in full reads: 'If ye are stricken with a wound, so too are the enemy stricken with a wound. These are but the days whose revolution I bring about among men—that God may know who is faithful and take martyrs from among you. For God loves not the iniquitous.' Muḥammad here comforts his followers after a defeat. But the Ikhwān, read the passage allegorically—hence their remark that no one understands it but the learned. The 'days' referred to, are the battle days of pre-Islamic discourse—hence, the fortunes of war, whose 'revolutions' God is said to bring about. Since the verb refers to the causing of revolutions in human fortunes, the animals take it as an allusion to the revolutions of the heavens, whose rising and falling constellations the learned (that is, the astrologers) can read as visible indications of the divine plan and destiny in regard to sublunary nature. Here the ecological idea of succession is merged with the concept of dynastic/imperial succession and with the astrological notion of the order and succession of astral events. Human—and animal—fortunes may rise or fall. The divine plan remains. Hence a position of dominance is no argument for human primacy in the divine scheme of things.

and stumbling with our tender pads over rocks and rough and broken ground, hungry and thirsty, our sides and backs ulcerated and sore from the rubbing of the saddles, you would have pitied us and wept for us. Where then is their pity?’

The elephant said, ‘Had you seen us, your Majesty, as prisoners in the hands of the sons of Adam with chains on our feet and cables about our necks while they handled iron goads to drive us, forcing us to the right or left in spite of our enormous bulk, mighty frames, long trunks, and tremendous strength, you would have pitied us and wept for us, your Majesty. Where then is the compassion and pity which this human claims they feel for us?’

Then the horse spoke, ‘Your Majesty, had you seen us as their prisoners on the battlefields, with bits in our mouths, saddles on our backs, and girths about our midparts, an armoured rider on our backs charging at full tilt, plunging into clouds of dust, hungry and thirsty, swords at our faces, lances to our chests, and arrows in our throats, swimming in blood and advancing toward death, you would have had pity on us, O King.’

The mule said, ‘Had you seen us, your Majesty, as their captives, our feet hobbled, our mouths bridled, our cheeks snaffled, and locks across our crotches to prevent our satisfying our natural desires, laden with pack saddles, atop which rode those low and foul-mouthed men who were our keepers and drivers and who insulted us with the vilest words at their command, whipping us about the face and hindquarters in such rage that often they were carried away and reviled themselves and their human sisters saying, “This ass’ prick up the ass of the dealer’s wife!” or the buyer’s or the owner’s—meaning their own fellows. All these abuses turn back upon them, since they are most suited to them.

‘Your Majesty, if you consider their stupidity, uncouth behaviour and foul speech, you will be amazed at how little is their discerning of their own abominable ways, ugly attributes, vicious characters, and wicked actions, their manifold barbarities, corrupt notions, and conflicting dogmas. They do not repent or take stock of what they do. They do not heed the warnings of their prophets or respect the commandments of their Lord, who said, “Let them show compassion and indulgence. Would you not wish that God show compassion to you?”¹ “Tell the faithful to forgive those who have no hope in the days of God.”² For He also says, “There is no creature that walks the

1. Qur’ān 24:22. ‘Let not those who have affluence and ease among you shun sharing with kin and with the poor and with those who have emigrated in the cause of God. Let them show com-*passion* and indulgence. Would you not wish that God show compassion to you—for God is most compassionate and merciful.’ Once again the Ikhwān give a universal significance to remarks which were first applied in a very specific historical juncture. In the animals’ plea, the unfortunate become the beasts, and the humans are identified with the affluent that should show indulgence. The notion of kinship is not in the portion of the verse quoted and is not relied upon in the appeal of the beasts.

2. Qur’ān 45:13. Those who have no hope in the days of God—that is in resurrection and redemption—here become the animals, in accordance with the eschatology adopted at the close

earth or flies on wings which is not a nation like you.”¹ And He said, “So that you may sit firmly on their backs and remember the grace of your Lord and say, praised be He who subjected them to us, for we could not have done it. And to our Lord we shall return.”²

When the mule had finished speaking, the camel turned to the much maligned pig and said, ‘Stand up and speak, tell of the Adamites’ oppression of the swine, set your complaint before the merciful King. Perhaps he will feel compassion for us and free us from our enslavement to them, for you too belong to the cattle.’

But one of the *jinni* scholars said, ‘No indeed, the pig is not of the cattle. On the contrary, he is a beast of prey. Do you not see that he has tusks and eats carrion?’

But another *jinni* said, ‘On the contrary, he belongs among the cattle. Do you not see that he has hooves and eats grass and hay?’

Another said, ‘He is a cross between cattle and beasts, like the giraffe that is a cross between cow, leopard, and camel, or like the ostrich, whose form resembles not only that of a bird but also that of a camel.’

Then said the pig to the camel; ‘Good Lord! What am I to say, and of whom shall I complain with all the conflicting things that are said of me. You have heard the opinions of the wisest of the *jinn*, and men differ even more about us; their doctrines and sects are even farther apart in our regard. Muslims say we are accursed and grotesque. They abominate the sight of us and find our smell revolting and our meat disgusting. They are loath even to pronounce our name, the Romans, on the other hand, eat our meat with gusto in their sacrifices and believe that it makes them blessed before God. The Jews detest, revile, and curse us although we have done them no wrong or injury, but only because of the enmity between them and the Romans and Christians.’³ The

of the *risāla*.

1. Qur’ān 6:38. The connection of this verse to its context in the Qur’ān is somewhat disjointed. The passage continues: ‘We have omitted nothing in the Book. Then to their Lord they will be gathered.’ The Book here is taken traditionally to be the Book of Destiny, and the passage seems to suggest the (Mu’tazilite) doctrine that animals will be requited in the hereafter. But the Ikhwān seem to reject such a doctrine at the close of this *risālah*.

2. Qur’ān 43:13.

3. The Beirut editor adds in a note: ‘This again is a chimerical notion on the part of the Ikhwān. Since the Jews’ detestation of swine antedates Christianity.’ It is Biblical, of course (Lev. 11:7). The whole passage is somewhat anachronistic. For by the Romans (*abnā’ al-Rūm*) is usually meant the Greeks of Byzantium, that is, the Eastern Roman empire. But they did not eat pork with gusto in their sacrifices. The pagan Romans and Greeks did, but they (did not suppose this made them blessed before (the monotheistic) God. I suspect the Ikhwān may have in mind the sacrifices of swine which Antiochus Epiphanes (r. 175–163 B.C.) ordained in his own honour, for this foe of the Hasmoneans was a monarch of Syria whose ardent Hellenism would allow him to be thought of as a ‘Rūmī’ in the Arabo-Islamic frame of reference. Muslim abhorrence of swine, which are forbidden as food in Islam, seems to stem from Muḥammad’s early Jewish contacts. The Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot*, 2, treats swine as a symbol of filth, and the Babylonian Talmud, *Menuḥot*, 64b, regards one who raises swine as accursed. But for the Christians’ ‘sacrifices’ see the *jinni* rejoinder to the Christian in chapter 19.

Armenians treat us the same as others treat sheep or cows and regard our fat bodies, rich meat, and abundant offspring as special blessings. Greek doctors use lard in their treatments and prescribe it in their medicines and cures. Animal keepers mingle us with their beasts and feed us in the same stalls because they believe an animal's condition to be improved by contact with us and even by scenting our smell. Magicians and sorcerers use our skins for their books, spells, amulets, and magic devices; saddlers and shoemakers prize our bristles and vie for the pluckings from our snouts, so great is their need for them. That is why we are confused. We have no idea whom to thank and against whom to complain of injustice.'

When the pig had finished speaking, the ass turned to the rabbit, which was standing between the camel's forelegs, and said, 'Tell of the mistreatment rabbits have suffered at the hands of man. Make your complaint before the King. Perhaps he will look into our case in his mercy, take pity on us, and set us free.'

But the rabbit said, 'We are already free from the tribe of Adam. We no longer venture into their dwelling places but have withdrawn into forests and glens where we are safe from their wrongs. Nonetheless, we are harassed by dogs, hunting birds and horses, who are men's abettors against us. They bear men to us and search us out for them along with our brethren the gazelles, wild asses, wild cattle, mountain sheep, and mountain goats.'

'In dogs and birds of prey it is excusable that they aid man against us,' the rabbit went on, 'for they have a reason to eat our meat, as they do not belong to our kind but are carnivores. But, the horse is a beast and our meat is not for him. So he should take no part in aiding men against us, unless out of ignorance and little understanding and discernment of the true nature of things.'

Chapter 5

'Stop right there,' the human interrupted. 'This censure of horses has gone too far! If you knew that they are the finest animals in man's service you would not have spoken in this way.'

'Tell us,' said the King, 'what great good you find in horses.'

'Their merits are many, both in their praiseworthy nature and in their marvellous character,' the man replied. 'They are beautifully formed, their bodies and parts in proportion, their frames well built, their colours pure and coats glossy; they are swift and responsive, taking whatever direction their rider may give them, left, right, forward, back, pursuing or fleeing, charging or retreating. Besides, horses are sharp witted. They have keen senses and are well mannered. Often they refrain from stalling or dropping while a rider is mounted; and, if their tails are wetted, they hold them still so as not to spatter their master. A horse must have the strength of an elephant to carry its rider with his weapons, helmet, and armour along with its own saddle, bridle, and coat of mail. The iron equipage alone must weigh nearly half a ton as he runs.'

And he must have the fortitude of an ass to endure the thrust of spears at his chest and throat in battle. Yet he lopes like a ravening wolf, walks like a proud bull, trots like a fox, and leaps like a great rock torn loose by a torrent, bounds like a wildcat. In a race for stakes he runs as though the victory would be his own,'

'True', the rabbit answered, 'but in spite of all these praiseworthy qualities and fine traits of character, horses have one great flaw which casts a shadow over all their virtues.'

'What is that?' asked the King. 'Can you explain?'

'It is lack of insight', said the rabbit. 'A horse will as readily run in flight with his master's enemy, whom he has never seen before, as with the master at whose home he was born and raised. He will as readily carry an enemy to his master as he carries the master in pursuit of an enemy. In this case he can be compared only to a sword which has no awareness, sense, or spirit. For it cuts off the head of the owner who burnishes it as readily as it does that of one who desires to break it or render it useless, seeing no difference between the two.'

'A similar fault', the rabbit continued, 'is found among men. Often one of them turns on his parents, brothers, or kin, works against them, and treats them as meanly as he would his worst enemy, who never gave him any kindness or cause for gratitude.¹ And in just this way these humans drink the milk of cattle as they drank their mother's milk and ride upon the shoulders of beasts as they rode upon their father's shoulders when they were small. They use animals' wool and fleece for coats, carpets, and upholstery, but in the end they slaughter, flay, disembowel, and dismember them and set them to boil or roast, unfeeling and unremembering all the good, all the blessings, so generously received of them.'

When the rabbit had finished his censure of men and horses, the ass said, 'You should not be overly reproachful. No one creature has been granted so many gifts and virtues that it does not lack something greater, and none is so deprived that it does not have at least some gift which no other has. God's gifts are many. No one individual can compass them all. Nor does any single species or genus have a monopoly on God's goodness. Rather God's generosity is parted among all creatures at large in greater or lesser shares. Indeed, the more clearly divinity shines through in a being, the plainer is its servitude.'² The two celestial luminaries, for example, the sun and

1. See Plato, *Statesman*, 298ff; the ambiguity of power. Just as the sword cuts friend and foe alike, the physician may cure or kill. The blindness of an artifact or natural object is its retention of the same nature and behaviour regardless of circumstances. Human moral blindness, by contrast, is changeability. The possibility of choice (and hence of moral fallibility) renders humans capable of turning against their friends. The fatal human blindness, however, does arise from the possibility of choice—and that is to be pled in mankind's favour.

2. Here the Platonic notion of participation is applied to the explanation of the divergent levels of perfection possible for diverse kinds. No finite creature can exhaust divine perfection, but all partake of a share in it, each in its own way manifesting some partial and relative expression of God's absolute perfection. God's gifts need not be shared out equally, and in a sense they

moon, received from God so generous a share of light, magnificence, splendour, and majesty that people often succumbed to the delusion that they were lords or gods, so clearly do the marks of divinity show in them. For this reason they were made subject to the insecurity of eclipses, providing a sign to the discerning that if they were gods they would not be darkened. The same holds true for the rest of the stars. They may be granted brilliant light, revolving spheres, and long lives, but they are not immune from flickering, or retrogression, or even falling, to show that they too are subordinate.¹ The same holds true with all the rest of creation, whether angels, men, or *jinn*. No one of these is given all the fair virtues and estimable gifts, but each lacks something greater. Perfection belongs to God alone, one and triumphant.²

When the ass had finished speaking, the ox added, 'But whoever has received a rich share in God's gifts ought to show his gratitude by giving of the surplus to those less fortunate beings that are deprived of the same gifts. Observe how the sun pours out light unstintingly on all creatures from the generous share it has been allotted. In the same way the moon and stars shed their influence, each according to its capabilities. This, then, is the course men ought to take as well, since they are granted divine gifts of which other animals are deprived. They ought to share these gifts ungrudgingly.³

cannot be, for species express divine grace in diverse ways, and creation as a whole is the richer for its diversity, the presence in it of all kinds and levels of things. But none has so low a place as not to have some unique perfection of its own, an expression of grace vital to its sustenance in its adaptive niche. And even the loftiest members of the celestial hierarchy are in some ways the lowest, for they are plainly the most manifestly subservient. The *Ikhwān* may have in mind the Qur'ānic passage regarding the obeisance of the celestial bodies before God, which al-Kindī as well as the Mu'tazilite *mutakallimūn* interpreted as expressing the subordination of celestial nature before God. See Qur'ān 55:5 and Kindī's *Rasā'il*, ed. Abū Rīdah (Cairo, 1950–1953), vol. 1, no. 8, and the discussion by R. Walzer, 'New Studies on Al-Kindī', in *Greek into Arabic* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 196ff.

1. The sixth-century Christian philosopher and controversialist John Philoponus argued (against Aristotle) that the stars were not uncompounded substances (and, therefore, immutable, indestructible, and uncreated). Their diverse colours suggested that they were composed of diverse materials; and their flickering, that they were undergoing some process. Philoponus argued that as terrestrial fires glare and glow with diverse hues depending on what fuels them, the stars might be undergoing diverse processes of combustion. He thereby became the founder of astrospectroscopy, as Shmuel Sambursky has pointed out. See Philoponus' *De Caelo*, *apud Simplicius De Caelo*, ed. J. L. Heiberg (Berlin, 1894), p. 89 and *De Opificio Mundi*, ed. G. Reischardt (Leipzig, 1897), p. 102, and the discussion by Sambursky in *The Physical World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1962), pp. 158ff. The thrust of Philoponus' argument is identical to that of the *Ikhwān*: Nothing in nature is perfect or absolute (Aristotle to the contrary notwithstanding, since he held the heavens and the cosmos at large to be divine, eternal, and immutable)—only God, who transcends nature and change, can be so regarded.

2. See Qur'ān 14:49, 40:16; 12:39, 13:17, 38:65, 39:6—all verses which allude to God as 'one and triumphant'. The *Ikhwān*, pacifically, here gloss the paired epithets as referring to God's unique, transcendent perfection, which individuals and species represent or express in diverse ways but which none engrosses.

3. The ox here makes an ethical obligation of what he regards as a natural law, in keeping

When the ox had finished speaking, the cattle and beasts all cried out together, 'Have mercy on us, just and noble King, and free us from the oppression of the tyrannous sons of men.'

The King of the *jinn* then turned to the body of *jinni* scholars and sages who were present and said, 'Have you heard the complaint of the cattle and beasts and their description of the injustice, oppression, and ruthless trespass they have borne at the hands of men?'

'We have heard all that has been said, and it is true and correct and everywhere to be seen,' they replied, 'night and day. It is by no means obscure to the aware. It was for this very reason that the race of *jinn* too fled from among men to deserts, wastelands and moors, mountaintops, hills, valleys, or seashores. We too saw their evil ways and vicious mores and shunned the lands in which they dwelt. Yet despite our circumspection, men never rid themselves of prejudice against us. They still believe that the *jinn* are tempters of men, causes of their aches and pains. Thus we become bogies of women, children, and the ignorant. They seek protection from us by wearing talismans, amulets, charms, and such. Still no one has ever seen a *jinni* harm or kill a human, snatch his clothes, steal his belongings, break into his house, pick his pocket, cut his sleeve, slip his lock, or lie in wait for a traveller, revolt against a ruler, mount a raid or a kidnapping. On the contrary, all these are the special distinctions of men in their behaviour toward one another night and day, heedless and unrepentant.'

with Plato's fusion of *nomos* (law) and *physis* (nature) in the concept of natural law developed in the *Timaeus*. There the cosmic order is treated as a divinely imposed rule, and human ethical standards are derivable from the maxim to live in accordance with nature. Kant preserves the Platonic rationalistic awe at the twofold natural law, which he expresses in his famous remark, 'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me' (*Critique of Practical Reason*, Conclusion.) The fusion of the moral with the cosmic law was the central principle or insight not only of the Platonists but also of all three of the monotheistic religions from their inception; and the monotheists welcomed Neoplatonism particularly because it regarded the cosmos from the perspective of the procession (*prohodos*) or emanation of being/goodness/grace from the One, God, to all particulars. It is to this concept of emanation, the work of Plotinus (205–270) that the Ikhwān here cause the ox to allude—a distancing which involves some prudence on their part, since emanationism was regarded as a somewhat heterodox doctrine especially in the early period of Islam, since it was read by the Neoplatonists as an alternative to creation. But emanation is an insistently recurrent theme in the cosmology (and politics) of the Ikhwān—as it is to become a persistent preoccupation of Muslim thought at large.

Regarding emanation as the source of inspiration Maimonides writes, 'Emanation to a thinker may be sufficient to make him a seeker, a person of discernment and understanding. Although he is not moved to teach other than himself or to write, finding no such desires in himself, or no such abilities. Or it might be sufficient to move him necessarily to write or teach ...' *Moreh Nevukhim*, II, 37, tr. L. E. Goodman, in *Rambam, Readings in the Philosophy of Moses Maimonides* (New York, 1976), p. 387. Maimonides compares emanation to wealth: it may be sufficient to its possessor or sufficient to enable him to make others wealthy as well. Such superabundance, he argues, creates a sense of compulsion on the part of the bestower; the Ikhwān express it as a matter of obligation.

When this speaker had finished, a herald announced, 'Honoured participants of this assembly, night has come. Return to your lodgings in honour; and, God willing, return safe in the morning.'

Chapter 6

Having recessed the court, the King was left alone with his counsellor, Bīdār, a distinguished and intelligent person and a philosopher. Said the King; 'You have observed the session and heard the arguments on both sides. You understand what they came for. What then do you think is right, and what do you advise us to do?'

The Wazīr said, 'God strengthen your Majesty and guide him to the right course. I think it best for the King to command the judges, jurists, scholars, and thinkers of the *jinn* to assemble in his presence and consult on this matter, for this is a weighty and momentous case involving lengthy contentions, highly problematic, and subject to numerous opinions. Consultation gives insight to the undecided, improved perception to the perplexed, and the assurance of certainty to sound judgment.'

'You are right', the King replied, 'what you say is good, and your plan is a fine one.'

The King then summoned the *jinni* judges of the family of Birjīs and the jurists of the family of Nāhīd,¹ *jinni* thinkers of the tribe of Bīrān and scholars of the stock of Luqmān, experienced *jinn* from the tribe of Hāmān, philosopher *jinn* of the tribe of Kaywān, and hardheaded, forthright *jinn* of the house of Bahrām.

When they were assembled before him, he met with them in private and said, 'You have learned of these parties who have landed on our shores and entered our country. You have seen them here in our court and have heard their claims and their charges and the complaints of these captive animals against the injustice of men. The animals have sought our aid and protection. What are your views, and what do you recommend be done?'

Then the chief jurist of the house of Nāhīd said, 'God strengthen the King's hand and guide him aright. The plan I would suggest is that the King command these beasts to write a brief stating the injuries they have suffered from men and seeking a ruling from the jurists. This will give them a means of gaining their freedom and escaping from this tyranny; for the judge, no doubt, will decide in their favour and rule either that they should be sold or freed or that their tasks should be lightened and they be given better treatment. Then, if the tribe of Adam does not act in ac-

1. Birjīs and Nāhīd are the planets Jupiter and Venus respectively. Consultation was the ideal method of policy formation in Arabic and Islamic culture, and the Ikhwān do not miss the chance of portraying the good *jinni* king as taking advice from ministers and counsellors.

cordance with the judgment, no crime can be charged against the animals should they, take flight.¹

'What do you think of this suggestion?' the King then asked the assembly.

All agreed that it was a fine and sensible idea except the forthright *jinni* of the house of Bahrām,² who said, 'Have you considered, who will lay out the price to buy the animals if the Adamites agree that they should be put up for sale?'

'The King', said the jurist.

'With what?' The King asked.

'With the treasury of the Muslim *jinn*.'

'There is not wealth enough in the treasury of the Muslim *jinn* to meet the cost', said the speculative *jinni*.³ 'Besides, many human beings will not wish to sell them since they need them so badly, and some do not need the money—kings, nobles,

1. The paradox of 'oriental despotism' was that while the monarch's authority might in theory be very extensive (never absolute!) particularly with regard to the adjudication of disputes and the 'righting of wrongs', the practical powers of enforcement were very limited outside the confines of the court. The medieval handbooks and 'mirrors for princes' like folk literature are filled with accounts of the ruses by which monarchs accomplished their designs, having first determined what was right in their view, an ample illustration, whether the anecdotes are fictive or contain a kernel of truth, of how woefully the executive power of the would-be despot fell short of his theoretical authority. See, for numerous examples, Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings (Siyāsāt-nāma)*, tr. H. Darke (London, 1960). The anecdotes of military and political ruses retailed by Machiavelli as encouragement and exemplar to the prince of his tutelage are very much a part of this tradition of political manoeuvring in which the key to the art of effective rule was the manipulation of small force to maximum effect. Pleas such as Locke's for the limitation of governmental authority could be intelligible only in the modern type of situation in which technological efficiency and national (rather than merely local) military organization made possible the widespread and effective deployment of power on a scale which was inconceivable in the Middle Ages—even for the *jinn*.

2. Bahrām—the name conjures up the memory of the legendary Persian hero.

3. The jurist is impractical, a common failing of Muslim jurisprudence not overlooked by the satirical eye of the Ikhwān, who enjoy the opportunity to use both animals and *jinn* as foils against which to display the foibles of their own society. Despite the 'lack of separation between church and state in Islam', the medieval Muslim monarch, like his Christian counterpart was in many ways a secular ruler deriving much of his authority (but not all of his power) from his religious role as defender of the faith. Muslim jurists, as custodians of a vast corpus of religious norms whose theoretical impact on practical life was pervasive, were constantly demanding fuller enforcement of those norms by kings—an enforcement which by the nature of the case could never be more than partial. (Relatively few Muslim rulers, for example, degraded the Jewish and Christian minorities to the satisfaction of the '*ulamā*' or juridical scholars.) From a secular perspective one can say that, as in Christendom, there was some tension over the division of secular authority and power between the 'clerks' and the 'secular arm' in Islam. Of the three monotheistic faiths, the Jews were in a sense the most fortunate in this regard during the Middle Ages. For lacking a geographical base or any monarchical or universal secular authority of their own, the rabbis could regard the existing gentile secular authorities with a distance which was impossible for Muslims or Christians to attain toward their own rulers, while the secular authority of the norms of Jewish religious law as a universal institution remained virtual rather than actual in all but the personal/familial and infracommunal spheres.

and the well to do, for example. Such a sale could never be accomplished, so do not weary yourselves trying to think of a way to do it.'

'What do you think is the right plan?' asked the King.

'I suggest,' said the thinker, that the King should order all the cattle and beasts in captivity to humans to concert a plan to flee, all on the same night, far from the realm of men, as did the wild asses and gazelles. Then when the humans awoke in the morning they would find none to ride or carry their burdens. They would not be able to pursue the animals because of the great distance and the difficulty of the road. Then the animals would be free.'¹

The King was resolved to follow this plan and asked the others how they viewed the thinker's proposal.

The chief scholar, of the house of Luqmān,² said, 'In my opinion this will not be brought off. It is too ambitious. Most of these beasts are tied up or stabled at night, so how could they all accomplish a coordinated flight on a single night?'

The hardheaded, outspoken *jinni* added, 'The King might send bands of *jinn* on that night to open the gates for them and loose their bonds and tethers. We could hold the watchmen until the beasts had gone far enough from human habitation. Your Majesty should know that there would be great reward for him in doing this. I am speaking absolutely candidly because I am touched by their plight. God is aware of the sound and benevolent intent of the King's resolve; His aid will ensure success. To help the oppressed and free the enslaved is the best thanks for God's blessings.³ In one of the books of the prophets, they say, it is written that God said, "O King that reigns, I did not give you power that you might gather riches and gratify your lusts and passions but that you in My place might answer the entreaties of the oppressed, for I do not repulse them even if they be unbelievers."'

At this the King was determined to accept what the speculative *jinni* had proposed. He said to the assembly around him, 'What do you think of what has been said?'

1. The radicalism of the speculative *jinni* is portrayed as the result of his rationalism and must be corrected by the experience and learning of the more retrospectively historical *jinn*; cf. Michael Oakeshott, 'Rationalism in Politics' in the book by the same title (New York, 1962).

2. Luqmān—a legendary sage referred to in Qur'an 31:11–19 (the Sūrah as a whole bearing his name) and thought of by the Arabic historians as a fabulist and author of proverbs, identified by some western authors with Aesop (that is, Aethiops) because of his alleged Ethiopian ancestry and slave origin. In the lore of *jinn* and sorcery Luqmān is the subject of numerous magical folk tales.

3. The argument is complex: the outspoken *jinni* does not overlook the possibility of divine reward for the action he advises. But he does not urge simply that the king execute his plan on that ground. Rather, he uses the notion of a divine reward as a means of introducing the concept of divine aid and approval of the plan, in other words, as an occasion for invoking the norms derivable from the highest theistic ideals in behalf of seeking the release of the enslaved and oppressed—an assertion in behalf of an activist political morality placed in the mouth of a *jinni* counsellor and addressed not to the rabble but to the king—hardly an actionable piece of subversion but a plea pregnant with the affirmation of the legitimacy of revolution, should conditions demand it.

They all agreed it was a generous and high minded plan.

All approved the plan except the philosopher of the house of Kaywān who said, 'God give you insight, your Majesty, into the unseen side of things and reveal to you the difficulties latent in tactics. The task proposed is fraught, unavoidably, with tremendous dangers, defects which are not remediable or rectifiable.'

'Tell us your view', said the King to the philosopher. 'Make clear what you fear and of what you are wary, so that we may be informed and aware.'

'I shall, Your Majesty', he said. 'There was something left out of this proposal for the beasts' escape from the Adamites' hands. When the race of Adam awakens in the morning and discovers that these beasts are gone, fled from their lands, will they not know with certainty that this was not the work of humans nor devised by the beasts themselves, but surely by the wiles of the *jinn*?'

'No doubt', said the King.

'Is it not the case', the philosopher continued, 'that thereafter, whenever men think of all the benefits and comforts they have lost through the animals' flight, they will be filled with grief, rage, and regret for their loss and rancour, malice, and hatred toward the *jinn*? They will conceive secret schemes and devices to ensnare us, search for us everywhere, and everywhere lie in wait for us. In place of our once secure life, the race of *jinn* will know nothing but trouble, enmity, and fear,

'One who is prudent and intelligent', the wise *jinni* added, 'is one who makes peace among enemies and does not draw enmity on himself.'

Everyone agreed that the wise philosopher was right.

Then one *jinni* scholar said, 'What harm have we to fear from the enmity of men? You know very well that the race of *jinn* are light, fiery spirits, which move upward by nature, while the sons of Adam are gross, earthly bodies, which move downward by nature. We see them, but they do not see us. We may flit amongst them unperceived and surround them without their sensing us. What is there for us to fear from them?'

'Alas', the wise *jinni* replied, 'you overlook their strongest point and their most significant advantage. Do you not realize that even though the sons of Adam have earthly bodies, they also have heavenly spirits and angel-like rational souls which make them superior to us? You must know that there are lessons to be learned from the events of ancient times and the experience of what passed between men and *jinn* in ages gone by.'

At that the King said, 'Tell us, wise one, what was it happened in ancient times, and what events transpired?'

'I shall, your Majesty', said he. 'Between men and *jinn* there is an inborn enmity, an inveterate hostility and mutual aversion which would take long to explain.'

'Tell us as much as seems convenient', said the King, 'beginning with the origin of this enmity.'

Chapter 7

The wise *jinni* said, 'In ancient times, before the creation of Adam, the forefather of the human race, the inhabitants of the earth were *jinn*. It was they who covered the earth, land and sea, mountain and plain. Their lives were long and filled with blessings in abundance. They had kings, prophets, religious faith and law.¹ But they grew wanton and iniquitous. They ignored the precepts of their prophets and increased corruption in the earth,² until at length the earth and its inhabitants joined in crying out against their iniquity.

'With the close of that cycle of time and the inauguration of a new age, God sent an army of angels down from Heaven to settle on earth and drive the *jinn* in flight to the far corners of the world. They took many captives including the accursed Satan Lucifer,³ the pharaoh of Adam and Eve,⁴ who was still an undiscerning lad. As he grew up among the angels, Lucifer acquired their knowledge. Outwardly he looked like them, but his real nature and stamp were different. With the long passage of time he became a chief among them, and for eons his commands and prohibitions were obeyed by them. But then that epoch too came to an end, and a new age began. God made a revelation to those angels who were on earth saying, "I shall place a viceregent on earth other than you, and you shall I rise to the Heavens". The angels on earth were loath to leave their familiar homeland and answered, "Wilt thou place on earth one who will work corruption there and shed blood as did the race of *jinn*, while we praise and sanctify thee?" God said, "I know what you know not,

1. There are two terms for religion in Arabic: *dīn*, a faith or creed and *sharī'ah*, a law or way of life. This twofold conception of religion was common to all three medieval monotheistic religions, but in modern times Protestant theologians, reverting to the quasi-antinomian tendencies of Pauline Christianity and reliance upon grace and faith in contradistinction to 'works', promulgated the notion that the essence of religion was faith. Enlightenment thinkers, eager to separate morality from theology (and thus to make possible the argument against organized and established religions that what was essential in religion was faith, a matter of conscience, which must inevitably be free, while morality was quite separable from faith and often diametrically opposed to hypocritical faith—all else in religion, being neither morally nor intellectually significant, was 'empty forms') accepted the Protestant notion of religion unquestioningly; and, through their influence, the terms 'creed' and 'faith' became widely used synonyms for religion, as though the practical content from which religions derive their only publicly manifest significance, were somehow of no account.

2. The phrase, of course, is Biblical and reflects the Biblical notion that moral corruption (that is decadence and lawlessness) pollute the earth and render it unfit for habitation—at least by those who have dealt corruptly (see Gen. 6:11–12; Deut. 13:13ff., etc.). This tendency, which J. H. Hertz felicitously termed the ethicizing of nature, articulates the Biblical naturalism in the thinking of the Ikhwān, since they regard pollution not merely as effluence but as the direct by-product of aggression and usurpation.

3. Satan, Lucifer—Iblis in Arabic.

4. In the usage of the Ikhwān the term pharaoh is generic and signifies any evil genius, the pejorative sense deriving from the Exodus story as recorded in the Qur'ān 7:102ff, 10:80ff, 20:8ff, etc.

for I have sworn an oath upon Myself that in the end, after the era of Adam and his seed I shall not leave a single one—angel, *jinn*, human, or any other beast—upon the face of the earth except those whom I choose.”¹ (There is a mystery in this oath which we have explained elsewhere.)

‘When God had formed Adam, fashioned him, and breathed into him of His spirit, and from him formed Eve, his mate, He commanded the angels who were upon the earth to bow down before the pair and yield to their command. All obeyed except Satan, who was proud and arrogant. A savage, envious frenzy had seized him when he saw that his dominion was at an end and that he must be a follower and a leader no longer.’²

‘God then commanded the angels to bear Adam, peace be upon him, up to the heavens and into the garden and made a revelation to him saying “Adam, thou and thy wife shall dwell in the Paradise and eat amply whatever you will, but do not approach this tree, for if you do you will both be doing wrong”.’³ This Paradise is a garden in the east atop a mountain of hyacinth which no mortal man can climb. Its soil was good; its climate temperate, summer and winter, night and day.⁴ It had many rivers, verdant trees and every sort of fruit, meadows, fragrant herbs, and flowers. The many animals did no harm, and the birds sang sweet, melodious songs. Both Adam and Eve had long hair streaming down from their heads, as lovely as ever graced a maiden, reaching their feet and covering their nakedness; this was the clothing in which they wrapped themselves, both cloak and ornament of their beauty. They used to walk along the river banks, among the plants and flowers, eating the many varieties of fruit from the trees and drinking water from the streams, not tiring their bodies or troubling their souls. There was no irksome ploughing, planting, irrigating, reaping, threshing, milling, or kneading, no spinning, weaving, or washing, nor any other of the tasks at which their children in our days toil in the struggle to sustain life in this world. They lived in the garden just like any other animal, in contentment, leisure, and delight.

‘God inspired Adam with the names of the trees, fruits, plants, and animals in the garden. As soon as Adam could speak, he asked the angels about them, but they gave no answer, so he sat down to teach them their names, benefits, and dangers. Thereafter the angels submitted to his command, for it was plain that he was better than they. When Satan saw this, his envy and malice grew. All through the morning and into the night he planned crafty and treacherous schemes against Adam and Eve. Then he approached them in the guise of one

1. See Qur’ān 2:28.

2. See Qur’ān 2:30ff.

3. See Qur’ān 2:33ff.

4. The Ikhwān echo their description of Paradise in the favourable descriptions they give of man’s terrestrial environment. But they add naturalistic garden-like features to create the image of an idyllic abode. For the impact of the concept of the enclosed garden see Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture, Fusion and Diffusion* (New York, 1959), chapter 16: ‘Blessed Landscapes and Havens’, pp. 212ff.

who offers friendly advice and said, "God has already made you superior by gracing you with clear speech and discernment, but if you ate of this tree, you would grow even wiser and surer and would remain here forever secure, immortal, and ever-abiding". They were deceived by his words, for he swore that he was, "a faithful friend". They were carried away with eagerness and neither could wait to taste the forbidden fruit. But when they had eaten of it, their hair parted and revealed their nakedness. They were left naked, the sun's heat beating down on them, blackening their bodies. The animals, seeing the change in them, shied away from them, and God commanded the angels to expel them from the Garden and cast them at the foot of the mountain.¹

"They fell in barren wasteland without plants or fruits, and there they remained for a long time, weeping and grieving over their loss and regretting what had become of them. Finally God's compassion reached out to them. He forgave them and sent an angel to teach them how to plough and sow, reap, thresh, grind, bake, spin, weave, sew, and make clothing. When they had reproduced and their seed had become numerous, some of the *jinni* race mingled with them and taught them the arts, planting and building, and showed them what was beneficial to them and what was harmful."²

1. See Qur'an 7:10ff: 'I created you, then formed you, then said to the angels "Bow down before Adam!" and all prostrated themselves—save only Satan, who was not among those who bowed down. He said "What prevents thee from bowing down when I have commanded you?" Satan replied "I am better than he. Thou hast created me from fire and him from clay."

"Then God said "Get thee down then from hence. It is not for thee to vaunt thyself here. Get thee gone, thou art made small!" Satan replied "Spare me till the day when they shall be resurrected." "Thou art spared." "Now since Thou hast caused me to stray will I lie in wait for them beside the straight path. ..." "Get thee gone, disgraced and banished! Whoso follows thee, of them—Hell shall I surely fill with ye all together!" "O Adam, dwell thou and thy mate in the Garden, and eat whither ye list, but approach not this tree or ye will be doing wrong." But the devil whispered to them, revealing to them their hidden shame: "Your Lord forbade this tree to you only lest ye become angels or immortals." He swore to them that his advice was faithful and sincere. Thus he led them into deception.

"And when they tasted of the tree their shame was revealed to them, and they strove to cover it over with leaves from the garden. But their Lord called to them "Did I not forbid that tree and say to you that Satan is your avowed enemy?"

"They answered, "Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if Thou dost not forgive us and have mercy on us, we are lost!" He answered "Get you down, each a foe to the other. There is a dwelling place for you upon the earth and a provision for a time. There shall ye live and there shall ye die, and thence shall ye be brought forth."

The stark rhetorical style of Muḥammad's archaic Arabic is reminiscent of a medieval passion play. The humbling of the angels is taken by the Ikhwān to symbolize the subordination to reason of the animal soul.

2. As in many traditional sources, the arts and industries upon which human sustenance depends are regarded as being of superhuman origin. This is in keeping with the general notion of the Ikhwān that human achievements, being adventitious to what might (by logical abstraction) be regarded as man's primitive nature, are not to be accounted to the glory of the human species. The earlier suggestion that arts and sciences might be accounted to human credit is here at least very strongly qualified.

These *jinn* befriended mankind and won their affection, and for some time they lived together on the best of terms.

'But each time the race of Adam remembered how the accursed Satan Lucifer had deceived their forefather and defrauded them, their hearts were filled with rage, malice, and rancour toward the race of *jinn*. When Cain killed Abel, Abel's descendents believed that this was done at the instance of the *jinn*, and hated them even more. They sought them everywhere and tried to ensnare them by every device of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery they knew, imprisoning some in bottles and afflicting them with all kinds of smoke and vapours which are noxious, noisome, and revolting to the *jinni* race.

'So things went until God sent the Prophet Idrīs,¹ who improved relations between the men and *jinn* through community of faith, law, submission,² and religion. The *jinn* returned to the domains of men and lived in concord with them until the days of Abraham, God's beloved. But when Abraham was cast into the fire men thought knowledge of the ballista had come to Nimrod the Tyrant from the *jinn*.³

1. Idrīs, the Islamic equivalent of the Enoch or Hermes Trismegistus figure, is the conveyor of occult knowledge to humankind. He is mentioned twice in the Qur'ān, once (19:57) as a saint and prophet whom God had 'raised to a lofty place' and once (21:85) along with Ishmael and a third person as steadfast or forbearing, a highly valued virtue in Muḥammad's ethical scheme. According to Islamic tradition, he was a descendant of Seth and ancestor of Noah, and by one account was close friends with an angel who bore him to the fourth heaven—a rather literal gloss on the 'high place' of the Qur'ānic reference. While the identity of Idrīs is unclear in some sources (for example, he is sometimes taken to be Elijah or al-Khiḍr) and his name is of obscure origin (sometimes derived from that of Ezra, sometimes from that of the Christian apostle Andrew or the Andrew who was cook to Alexander the Great and becomes glorified in the Alexander romance—cf. J. Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin, 1921), p. 88f. s.v. Idrīs), nevertheless Idrīs emerges clearly as a central figure in the thought of hermetically inclined Muslim thinkers. Ibn 'Arabī, the dean of Muslim mystics (1165–1240), calls Idrīs 'the prophet of the philosophers', where the term philosopher is to be understood in the hermetic sense as denoting one who seeks and practices the arts and sciences of theosophy—theurgy, astrology, alchemy—the sense connoted in references to the 'philosophers' stone. This would be the natural person to 'improve relations' between men and *jinn*.

2. Submission—the literal meaning of Islam, that is, the placing of one's life and destiny in the hands of God (see Qur'ān 2:112). The term is used here generically to denote the assumption of an attitude of religious faith and trust, not anachronistically as a reference to the faith of Muḥammad's followers to which that name is assigned. It is a central doctrine of Muḥammad's that his faith was preceded by numerous essays in essentially the same direction.

3. According to the Qur'ān (21:51ff. 26:69ff. 29:15ff, etc.), Abraham was cast into the flames for his iconoclastic rejection of pagan worship. The Qur'ānic account of Abraham is laced with Midrashic accretions and strongly coloured by the changing relations of Muḥammad with the Jews of Medina. Common forefather of the Arabs and Jews and founder of monotheism, Muḥammad's Abraham takes on a more peculiarly Islamic colouration as founder of a monotheistic cult centred in the Ka'bah at Mecca and grantor of preference to Ishmael, after Muḥammad's break with the Median Jews and reorientation towards Mecca.

The Ikhwān are painfully aware that Nimrod the Tyrant (as they consistently refer to him) was a monarch of their own Mesopotamian land, and their repeated references to him as a persecutor of freedom of conscience in religion seem to bear overtones of a plea for toleration, especially through the unspoken contrast of Nimrod the Tyrant with Biwārāsp the Wise, who openly and

And when Joseph's brothers cast him into the pit, this too was laid to the deceit of Satan who was of *jinni* race.¹ When God sent Moses, he reconciled the *jinn* and Israel through religious faith and law,² and many *jinn* embraced his faith.

'In the days of Solomon, God strengthened the power of his throne and made *jinn* and demons subservient to him.³ Solomon subdued the kings of the earth; and the *jinn* vaunted themselves over mankind, claiming that Solomon had achieved this through their help. Without the *jinn*'s assistance of Solomon, they said, he would have been like any human king. The *jinn* led humans to believe that they knew the unknown; but, when Solomon died, and the *jinn*, still undergoing their humiliating chastisements, knew nothing of his death, mankind realized that if they had had occult knowledge they would not have remained in such degrading torment.⁴

generously receives all the diverse parties that appear before his court.

1. The story of Joseph is told at length in Qur'ān 12.

2. Moses is conceived of by the philosophically inclined thinkers of Islam in accordance with views articulated by Philo and among Muslim thinkers by Fārābī (d. 950) as not merely a prophet and founder of a religion but a lawgiver along the lines projected by Plato in his conception of the Philosopher-King. Maimonides explains that prior to Moses prophets spoke of their personal spiritual experiences leading to encounter with divinity, addressing themselves to family members and others who came within the sphere of influence of their personalities. Moses by contrast legislates for a nation. The nexus between law and faith (that is, the spiritual/intellectual side of religion), to which the Ikhwān here allude, was that the law was regarded as the practical interpretation of the truth discovered by spiritual/philosophical insight, just as Plato had said it should be. Through belief and symbol, poetry and rhetoric, the prophetic legislator binds the hearts and imaginations of his hearers to the practices which will lead to the perfection of their characters morally and intellectually, to the extent possible, thus conveying these insights from a high and abstract level to a broad and practical, immediately graspable level. Adherence, such as that of the *jinn*, is a natural response.

3. The legends of Solomon's intimacy with the *jinn* are Midrashic, doubtless pegged upon the Biblical ascription (1 Kings 5:9ff) of wisdom to the tenth-century B.C. monarch of Israel—which was understood supernaturally. Cf. 1 Kings 3:28—where the popular response is already interpreted as one of awe at Solomon's portentous wisdom. The lore of 'Suleiman bin Daoud' and the *jinn* enters Islam through the Qur'ān and reverts to midrashic and other sources as well as the fertile imagination of the storytellers for constant enlargement of matter and detail, a process which continues down to Kipling's delightful tale of the butterfly who stamped in the *Just So Stories*. For Solomon in the Qur'ān, see 2:96, 4:161, 6:84, 21:78ff. The former passages refer to God's inspiration of Solomon along with other prophets. The last reads as follows: 'And [tell of] David and Solomon—how they judged as to the plow land when the strayed sheep grazed in it. We bore witness to their judgment. We gave understanding to Solomon, judgment and learning to them both. And in time with David we set the mountains [see Ps. 114:4, 6] that they might give praise, and the birds—We were the doers.... To Solomon the tempest wind to course at his command to the land toward which was Our blessing—and We knew all things—demons to dive for him and do other work besides, under Our superintendence ...' Cf. 38:33ff.

4. See Qur'ān 34:10ff: 'We gave David of Our grace: "O ye mountains and birds echo back his song." And we made iron soft to him [the Qur'ānic David was skilled in the armourer's craft].... And to Solomon we gave the wind, whose morning course was a month's journey and whose evening course was a month's journey, and caused molten brass to flow for him, and gave him some of the *jinn* to labour before him by leave of his Lord.... They made for him what he

'Also, when the Hoopoe brought his report of Bilqīs,¹ and Solomon said to the throng of *jinn* and men, 'Which of you will bring me her throne before they arrive?' the *jinn* boasted, and one sprite, Iqtar son of Māyān of the house of Kaywān, said, "I shall have it here before you rise from your place". That is before court was recessed. Solomon said, "I want it faster than that". At that, a man who had knowledge of the Book, Āṣaf ibn Barkhiyā, said, "I shall have it here in the twinkling of an eye" And when Solomon saw it already standing solid at his side, he knelt in prayer. Man's superiority to the *jinn* had been made manifest. The court ended, and the *jinn* retired, their heads hung in shame, followed by the crowd of men who tramped after them clapping their hands and hooting at them.²

After the events I have mentioned, a band of *jinn* escaped from Solomon, and one rebelled against him. Solomon dispatched some of his troops in pursuit and taught them how to snare the *jinn* with magic spells, mystic words, and revealed

would—shrines, images, platters like great troughs, and mountainous kettles... But when We had ordained his death nought showed them he had died but a tiny creature that crept upon the earth, which gnawed away his staff. Then, when he fell, the *jinn* realized that had they had knowledge of the unseen they would not have remained in such degrading torment.'

1. The story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1–13) is reported in Qur'ān 27:15–45: 'We gave knowledge to David and Solomon and they said "Praise be to God who preferred us over so many of his faithful servants!" Solomon was heir to David, and he said "O ye folk, we have been instructed in the discourse of the birds [1 Kings 5:13 states plainly that Solomon discoursed of the trees, of the beasts, of the birds, of the creeping creatures and of the fish, but that was no hindrance to the makers of legends] and have been granted all things—truly this is a clear act of grace." Armies of *jinn* rallied to Solomon, as did humans and birds. They advanced in battle array, until they came to the valley of the ants, and an ant said "Enter your dwellings, O ye ants, lest Solomon and his forces trample you unaware." ... He reviewed the birds and said "What's this? I do not see the hoopoe? Is he missing? I shall surely chastise him sorely—or kill him unless he gives a good excuse!"' The bird arrived not long after with his report of Sheba; see chapter 12. The story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba was a favourite of Muḥammad's—perhaps because it brought the Biblical potentate into contact with a people of Arabia—and also apparently a favourite of the Ikhwān; as with the Adam and Eve story, elements of it recur in both texts. The Ikhwān presumably were attracted by the role of the *jinn* in Solomon's service and the recurrent assertion of God's sovereignty—symbolized by his subjection of the *jinn* to a mere mortal, paralleling the incongruence between Sheba's earthly (but highly portable) throne and the true might of God's throne. For the naturalistically inclined, the *jinn* were natural forces, and God's subjection of them to Solomon is an early harbinger of the alchemical *homo faber* or Faustus type, who may govern nature with God's help but is lost (as the Ikhwān repeatedly remind their readers) without reliance on God's aid.

2. The humans are hardly sporting, especially not as perceived by the *jinn*. But the point of the lesson taught at the *jinn*'s expense was divine sovereignty. Reliance upon natural or magical force inevitably is 'slower' than direct appeal to God, since He is source of all such powers. The *jinni* relied on his own power, which was derived from that of God. The human, ('who had knowledge of the Book') appealed directly to God. The weakness of this mode of comparison is that it makes the divine simply another counter in the magical technology—as, for example, the name of God in kabbalistic theurgy becomes simply another (highly potent) magic spell. The object had been to subordinate demonology and magic to theism, but the outcome could easily become making God simply a super demon.

verses, and how to confine them by means of sorcery. He also produced a book for this purpose which was found in his treasury after his death. Until he died, Solomon kept the rebel *jinn*¹ at work with arduous tasks.

'When Christ¹ was sent, he called all creatures, humans and *jinn* alike, to God. He imbued them with a desire to find Him, showed them the way, and taught them how to mount to the Kingdom of Heaven. A number of bands of *jinn* embraced his faith. They took to a monkish path and did ascend up to heaven. There they overheard tidings among the supernal throng and relayed reports of them to the soothsayers.

'When God sent Muḥammad, God bless and keep him, *jinn* were kept from eavesdropping, and they said, "We do not know whether evil is intended against those who are on earth or whether their Lord desires them to go right".² Some bands of *jinn* entered Muḥammad's faith and became fine Muslims. Since then *jinni* relations with Muslims have been peaceable down to our own days.'

'Assembly of *jinn*', the *jinni* scholar concluded, 'do not antagonize them and spoil our relations with them. Do not stir up their dormant hatred or revive that inveterate prejudice toward us which is ingrained in their nature. For that hatred is like the fire that lies hidden in stones³ and appears when they are struck together and lights up the matches that can burn houses and bazaars. God protect us from the triumph of the wicked and the dominion of the iniquitous, which brings ruin and disgrace!'

When the King had heard this startling account, he lowered his eyes in thought. Then he said, 'Tell us, wise one, what in your opinion is the right thing to do with these animals that have come seeking our protection? How shall we let them go satisfied that our decision is just?'

The wise *jinni* replied, 'A sound judgment can be reached only after much deliberation, careful and exhaustive investigation, and consideration of the past. What I suggest is that the King hold a court of inquiry tomorrow in the presence of the disputants and hear their arguments and explanations so as to clarify the merits of the case for those who will undertake to judge it. After that there will be time to formulate a decision.'

The outspoken *jinni* said, 'If these beasts are unable to stand up against humans in argument because they lack their powers of clear and eloquent speech and men win out over them with their clever tongues and fine explanations, do you believe that these animals should remain their prisoners, to be tormented by them forever?'

'No', he said, 'but the beasts must have patience in captivity until the cycle of the epoch has run its course and a new order is begun. Then God will bring

1. Muslims accept the annointedness of Jesus and acknowledge him a prophet but deny his divinity.

2. Qur'ān 72:10.

3. See Anaxagoras, fragment 17, *apud* Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, 163.20.

them freedom and deliverance just as he delivered the House of Israel from the oppression of the House of Pharaoh, the House of David from the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar, the House of Ḥimyar from that of Tubba',¹ the House of Sāsān from the tyranny of the Greeks, the House of 'Adnān from the torment of the House of Ardashīr.² The days of this nether world run in cycles allocated among its inhabitants, turning at the behest of God and by His foreknowledge and the action of His almighty will, through the influences of the conjunctions of the stars as they revolve each thousand years, or twelve thousand years, or thirty-six thousand years, or three hundred and sixty thousand years, or each day of fifty thousand years.³

Chapter 30

When the frog had finished speaking a *jinni* sage said, 'You overlook one thing, O humans, and you animals too, you of the earth with your gross and heavy earthly bodies with their three dimensions, you who dwell on land or sea or mountain, you fail to note the multiplicity of spiritual creatures, luminous wraiths, right spirits, subtle spectres, uncompounded souls, and disembodied forms which dwell

1. The last reference is to the pre-Islamic history of Arabia as alluded to in the Qur'ān (44:30ff and 50: 11ff). Tubba' was a recurrent name among the (tyrannous) kings of the Ḥimyarites.

2. The references are to Persian relations with the Greeks and Arabs. Ardashīr is Artaxerxes. The first king of that name (d. 240) overthrew the Parthians, reunited Persia, founded the Sasanian dynasty, established Zoroastrianism as the state religion, and repulsed the Roman army of Alexander Severus (although with heavy losses). The rise of the Sasanids was out of the ruins of Seleucid power in Persia and was thus the overcoming of Greek domination which harked back to the conquests of Alexander the Great. 'Adnān, a descendant of Ishmael, is the eponymous ancestor of the northern Arabians. The reference then is to the cessation of Persian hegemony in and influence on Arabia, decisively marked by the conquest of the Sasanian forces by Muslim armies at the battle of Qādisiyyah in 635.

The Ikhwān express a sympathy for both Persian and Arab nationalistic sentiments as liberating—despite the historic antipathy of the two movements to one another and despite the more catholic viewpoint of the Ikhwān themselves. Nationalism for them cannot be an end in itself. They regard demands for freedom from alien hegemony as just and natural, but counsel patience until the 'epoch' be fulfilled—hardly an unambiguously conservative, pacific, or quietistic counsel.

3. The cosmic rhythms, being invariant, so far as most ancient observations and calculations could determine, were at least from the time of Aristotle (cf. *Metaphysics*, *Lambda*) paradigms of the divine perfection and naturally became emblems of divine justice once they were invoked by Hellenistic Greek philosophers as symbols if not engines of divine providence, through which nature was governed. The Ikhwān thus naturally expect balance and equilibrium to be struck among moral as well as physical accounts by the completion of the cycles of the heavens. Like the neo-Darwinians, then, they temporalize the chain of being. But just as their natural hierarchy has no apex which is superior to all the rest in every way (although man is superior in one crucial way) so their history has no absolute culmination which obviates all that has gone before (although the Qur'ānic judgment day, beyond history, ends it and breaks the rhythm of the cosmic cycles themselves, since even these were a compromise of eternity with temporality and thus must end once history has served its purpose).

within the apertures between the tiers of the heavens and travel through the vast expanse of the spirit world and amidst the spheres—all sorts of angels, Cherubs, and Bearers of the Throne, all the luminous spirits in the globe of the aether and all the nations of *jinn* and troops of demons, the ranks of Satan all together, who dwell in the globe of the Zamharīr.

‘If you, the human and the animal kinds, knew how many genera of these creatures there are, which are not bodies composed of the elements nor objects extended in the dimensions, and if you knew how many species and diverse forms of them there are and how diverse are even our individuals, then the multiplicity of corporeal animals’ genera and specific forms and particular individuals would seem small indeed to you. For the extent of the globe of the Zamharīr is more than ten times the extent of the earth and sea. And the diameter of the aetherial globe is again more than ten times that of the Zamharīr. And the diameter of the sphere of the moon is ten times greater than the breadth of that entire globe. And in the same proportion is the sphere of Mercury to that of the moon; and so in the same relation with all the concentric spheres up to the highest encompassing sphere. And the whole expanse of all of these is filled throughout with spiritual creatures so that not a single span is left unoccupied by some kind of spiritual beings, as the Prophet told when he was asked about God’s words “None knows His hosts but He”,¹ and he said, peace upon him and all his house, “There is not in the seven heavens a hand’s breadth of place without some angel, standing, bowing, or prostrating before God.”²

‘If you considered what I have said, O you human and animal kinds’, the *jinni* sage continued, ‘then you would realize that you are the least of creatures in number and the lowest in rank and status. You would understand then that the multiplicity of which you boast, O human, is not a sign of your being masters or of others’ being your slaves. Rather all of us are slaves of God, exalted be He, His hosts and subjects, whom He has subordinated one to another according to the determination of His wisdom and the dictate of His sovereignty. And to Him is due the praise for that and for His abundant and manifold bounties.’

When the *jinni* sage had finished speaking the King said, ‘We have heard what you have stated, O race of humans, and what you have gloried in, and you have heard the reply. If you have anything to add beyond what you have stated, present your proofs if you speak truly, adduce your arguments, and elucidate your claims.’

At that the orator from the Hījāz, from Mecca and Medina, rose and said, ‘Yes, Your Majesty. We have other virtues and distinctions which show that we are lords and these animals are slaves to us and we are their masters and owners.’

‘What are they?’ asked the King.

1. Qur’ān 74:34.

2. The *ḥadīth* is read as signifying the ontic plenitude of the Great Chain of Being, which dwarfs all sublunary creation.

'The promises of our Sovereign to us that we of all the animals will be resurrected and raised up, brought out of our graves and dealt our reckoning on the Day of Judgment, admitted by the Straight Path and entered into Paradise, the blessed Garden, the eternal garden, the Garden of Eden, Garden of Refuge, the Abode of Peace, of Rest, of Abiding, Abode of the Trusting, the Tree of Beatitude, the Spring of Salsabīl, rivers of wine, of honey, of milk, and of pure, sweet water, with storeyed citadels and dark-eyed maids to wife, and God close by, All-merciful, All-glorious, All-bountiful, and the scent of the breeze and the verdure, all stated in the Qur'ān in some seven hundred verses and all of which these animals are deprived of.¹ This shows that we are masters and these are slaves to us. And we have further distinctions, which I do not mention. I have said my say. God grant pardon to me and you.'

Then at that point rose the spokesman of the birds, the nightingale, and said, 'Yes, it is as you say, O human, but state also the balance of the promise, O humans, the torment of the grave, the interrogation by Nakīr and Munkar, the terrors of the Day of Resurrection, the rigour of the accounting, the threat of entry into the flames and chastisement in Hell and the burning fires of Gehenna, the searing and the blazing, the scorching and the seething of the Abyss, the close shirts of pitch, the drinking of putrescence and purulence, the eating of the Tree of Zaqqūm, the nearness to the Master of Wrath, Gatekeeper of the Fire, propinquity to the demons, the hordes of Satan all together—all that is stated in the Qur'ān, side by side with every verse of promise, by way of threat and admonition.² All this applies to you and not to us. We are clear of all of this. Just as we are promised no reward, we are threatened with no retribution. We are content with our Lord's judgment in our case, neither for us nor against us. As He withholds from us the blessing of the promise, so He removes the terror of the threat.

'The evidences, then, cancel each other, and the advantages of your position and of ours are equal. So you have nothing by which you may claim superiority.'

'How are the advantages of our position and of yours equal', demanded the Hījāzī, 'when we in either case survive eternally and immortally? If we are obedient, then we shall be with the prophets, leaders, saints, and sages, the blessed and the best, the most virtuous and great souled, the pure, abstemious, devout, upright, aware, insightful, sage, understanding, excellent, and elect, who are like the angels, who pursue the highest goods and yearn after their Lord and turn toward Him in all situations and occasions, hearken to Him, look to Him, and contemplate His greatness and magnificence, trust Him in all their affairs, beseech Him alone, seek from Him alone, and hope in Him alone, for their concern is His dread.

1. I hesitate to cite in full, but chiefly: Qur'ān 7:40ff, 15:45ff, 19:61ff, 36:54ff, 37:42ff, 38:51ff, 43:70ff, 44:51ff, 52:17ff, 55:46ff, 56:12ff, 76:12ff.

2. See, for example, Qur'ān 11:106ff, 22:19ff, 25:11ff, 38:57ff, 40:46ff, 43:74ff, 56:41ff, 78:21ff.

‘And if we are rejected, still we shall seek refuge in the intercession of the prophets (peace upon them) and especially in our lord Muḥammad (peace upon him), and then we should remain thereafter in the Garden with the Ḥūrīs and the youths, addressed by angels saying “Peace be unto you, pleasure to you, enter among the immortals”.¹ But you, the animal kind, are deprived of all this. For, after you are departed you do not survive.’

Then the animal spokesmen and the *jinni* sages all said together, ‘Ah humans, now at last you have come to the truth, you have spoken what is right and answered truly. For such claims as you now make are indeed something to boast of and such deeds as you speak of are indeed something to strive for and such lives and characters, such manners and diverse sciences as you ascribe to these holy persons are indeed something to be sought after and striven for. But tell us, O humans, of the characteristics of these persons, expatiate on their way of life, inform us of their ways, of their insights, of the excellence of their characters and the rectitude of their doings, if you know aught of these and state these things if you are aware of them.’

Then the entire body fell silent for a time, thinking over what they had been asked. But no one had an answer.²

At length a learned, worthy, keen, pious, and insightful man rose. He was Persian by breeding, Arabian by faith, Abrahamic (*ḥanīf*)³ in his Islam, Iraqi in culture, Hebrew in lore, Christian in manner, Damascene in piety, Greek in the sciences, Indian in contemplation, Sufi in intimations, regal in character, masterful in thought, and divine in insight. He said, ‘Praised be God, Lord of the worlds, Destiny of the faithful and foe to none but the unjust. God bless the Prophet Muḥammad and all his house together.’

‘Now then,’ he commenced, ‘most just Majesty; since it is now clear and has been made clear in your presence that what the human party claims is true and it is now plain before this court that among this party there are saints of God, the choice flower of His creation, the best, the purest, who are God’s elect, and that these folk have noble attributes, fair characters, pious acts, diverse sciences, sovereign insights, royal traits, just and holy lives, and wondrous ways, which tongues weary to recite and description cannot do justice to in their essence, which would take long to describe, and which lengthy sermons cannot adequately reach the core of when seeking to enumerate their ways and the virtues of their noble ways of life and character, though they went on for ages—what does your just Majesty command regarding these human strangers and these animals, who are their slaves?’

1. See Qur’ān 16:30ff.

2. The final irony of the many ironies of *The Case of the Animals versus Man*.

3. The one who is of the religion of Abraham which at the same time is in the religion of all prophets of God, i.e., Islam.

The King then ordered that all the animals were to be subject to the commands and prohibitions of the humans and were to be subservient to the humans and accept their direction contentedly and return in peace and security under God's protection.¹

Here the fable ends.

1. Man then is placed in the end in a role of stewardship over nature—given freedom to use the benefits nature affords, but always under the overseership of God, who remains the animals' protector as well as their provider, to whom man himself will be accountable when his epoch of stewardship is at an end.

al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shīrāzī

The full name of this central figure and chief *dā'i*, who throughout Ismaili literature is referred to as 'Sayyidunā al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn', is al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Abū Naṣr Hibat Allāh b. Abī 'Imrān Mūsā Shīrāzī. He is believed to have been a direct descendant of Salmān Fārisī. While it is difficult to establish the exact date of his birth, one can say that he was born some time in the middle or end of 390 AH/999 AD in Shīrāz and died in 470/1078 in Cairo, where he was buried in the Dār al-'Ilm (House of Knowledge), his place of residence. Not much is known about his early education, but coming from a family of missionaries, he was promoted to be the head of the missionaries of Shīrāz and the *ḥujjat* for the whole of Persia.

Shīrāzī's father, hailing from a Daylamī Ismaili family, was a missionary with some influence in the Būyid circles of Fārs. Shīrāzī probably succeeded his father as the chief missionary of Fārs, and in 429/1037 entered the service of the Būyid Abū Kālījār Marzubān. The subsequent decades in Shīrāzī's life are well documented in his autobiography (*sīra*). He soon succeeded in converting Abū Kālījār and many of his Daylamī troops to Ismailism. Shīrāzī's growing influence with the Būyid amir and the people of Fārs resulted in court intrigues against him. In particular, the Abbasids insisted on his exile from Persia. Eventually, Shīrāzī was obliged to leave Shīrāz in 438/1046. After an eventful journey, he arrived in Cairo in 439/1047. After some initial difficulties, Shīrāzī gained access to the Fatimid caliph al-Mustanṣir and participated actively in the affairs of the Fatimid state. Subsequently, in 447/1055, Shīrāzī played a leading role as an intermediary between the Fatimids and the Turkish commander Basāsīrī in the latter's activities against the Seljuqs. In 450/1058, he was appointed to the position of *dā'i al-du'āt* (chief missionary), and with the exception of a brief period in 453/1061, he held that post until two months before his death.

Shīrāzī left a legacy as statesman, politician, and missionary, as well as numerous pupils, among whom are Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Lamak ibn Mālik. One of his students, Ḥātim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī, from Yemen, compiled the bulk of

al-Mu'ayyad's sermons, entitled *Jāmi'at al-ḥaqā'iq*, which constitutes an encyclopedia of Ismailism.

Shīrāzī is not a philosopher in the strict sense of the word, but he should be regarded as a theologian and an Ismaili intellectual. In this chapter we have included parts of his sermons in which he elucidates the esoteric secrets of the Qur'ān. The first lecture, 'Potential and Actual *Jannat*', discusses the esoteric symbolism of heaven, while the second lecture, entitled 'The Real Names of God', offers an analysis of Divine Names—in particular *al-Raḥmān* (mercy). In the third lecture, Shīrāzī explains 'the meaning of *al-Salām*', followed by the twelfth lecture, entitled 'the *walāyat* of 'Alī'. The concept of *walāyat* (spiritual guardianship) and the role of Imam 'Alī as the interpreter of esoteric Islam are emphasized. Shīrāzī continues the same theme in the thirteenth lecture, 'True Faith in the Unity of God Cannot be achieved without the Guidance of the Imams', as well as in the fourteenth lecture, where 'The True Meaning of the Tradition' is brought forth. This chapter ends with a discussion concerning the nineteenth lecture of Shīrāzī, titled after the prophetic *ḥadīth* 'He Who Knows Himself Knows His Lord'.

M. Aminrazavi

SERMONS

Khuṭbah

Reprinted from al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shīrāzī's *Khuṭbah*, ed. and tr., Javad M. Muscati and Khan Bahadur A. M. Moulvi (Karachi, 1969), pp. 78–91, 141–153 and 174–178.

Lecture First: Potential and Actual 'Jannat'

May God make you profit by your living a pious life and your submission to the will of the Imam of the time. You must bear in mind that luckily for you, you are living in the dominion of the descendants of the Prophet whose sovereign power for sometime was usurped by the tyrants. After all God has restored it to its legitimate claimants. By this, He has proved the rightfulness of the cause of the Imams and the utter falsehood of the pretences of their opponents.

The Holy Qur'ān says, 'They intend to put off the light of God by blowing it by their mouths. But God has decided to keep His light burning forever.' This refers to the Imams. Their enemies did their best to put out the light of God. Thank God for the favour He has done to you by keeping the divine light burning forever for your good. Keep aloof from those who turned their backs to this light and have shown utter ingratitude to Him. They have done no harm to God but to themselves. They have scratched their bodies by their own nails. They have treated with scorn the holy mosques of God and the arches of the mosques. To put it in plain language they have wronged the Imams, the descendants of the Prophet. The Holy Qur'ān says, 'O *mu'mins* [faithful ones], go to the mosque properly dressed.' The mosque here stands for the Imam. The enemies of the Imams enjoy peace and prosperity under them and yet they revolt against them. This is the work of traitors. God is with the Imams. No treachery can succeed with them. He always helps their cause and makes their mission prosper.

Last time I explained to you the meaning of the verses up to the verse: '*Jannat* has been kept ready for the pious and it is not far away from them.' There are two forms of *jannat* the potential *jannat* and the actual *jannat*. The potential *jannat* is embodied in *da'wat al-Ḥaqq* i.e. the teachings of the Imam of the Time. The *da'wat* is the substance of the Qur'ānic teachings and the extract of everything that pertains to religion. When a *mu'min* is initiated into the mystery of this faith, he is being prepared, stage by stage, by the knowledge acquired through the Imams and his living a straight life, for the second *jannat*, the actual *jannat*. He cannot enter this *Jannat* unless he gets over his animal nature by this process.

Just as an embryo in a womb cannot experience life in this world unless it develops into a full-formed babe, similarly man in this material world which is a sort of a second womb for him, has to develop, through knowledge and practice, the

qualities of the inmates of Paradise before he can experience the life in the *jannat*. The life there is as much different from the life of this world as our life from the life in the womb.

I have pointed out to you that every *ḥadd* in his time whether he is a Prophet, a *waṣī* or an Imam, from the point of view of his teaching is a *jannat* who qualifies us for entry into the actual *jannat* and experiencing a new life.¹

The verse referring to *jannat* is followed by a second verse which says 'This is what you have been promised for every *awwāb* and *ḥāfiẓ*'. The word *awwāb* means one who in all his activities and even non-activities in this life, looks to his Lord for guidance. This is the sum and substance of religion which is a ceaseless chain, link within a link. It has two sides, the celestial and terrestrial. On the terrestrial side of the chain the links are placed one above the other every one of whom derives his authority from his immediate predecessor right up to the Prophet. On the celestial side are the angels, the spiritual beings, on a rising scale up to the 'Tablet' and the 'Pen' which are the upper head of the celestial chain.

The Prophet says 'Between me and my God there are five mediums one above another. They are Jibrā'il, Mikā'il, Isrā'īl and the Tablet and the Pen.' This is the highest point which an *awwāb* can reach for his authority.

The word *ḥāfiẓ* indicates that the different positions of the Imams are well-defined. Every one of them has a fixed position. It is they who guard the various steps in spiritual progress. God says 'We have adorned the firmament of this world with the stars. We have guarded them against every intruding devil. If these devils attempt to listen to what is going on in the celestial world they will not be allowed to hear. They will be thrown away from every direction and will be severely punished.' In another passage He says, 'We have brought down the *dhikr* and we are its preservers.'

We shall deal with these verses at the next *majlis*. May God help you in deriving the fullest benefit from this knowledge and acting on it. May He guide you to the right path which is the only straight path leading to salvation.

Lecture Second: The Real Names of God

O *mu'mins* [faithful ones], May God help you in thanking Him for the favour He has done to you by guiding you through the Imams. Cut short your connections with the wicked world which have been corroding your inner self. Attach yourselves to the place where you will be free from worries. This is the Abode of Bliss the keys of which are in the hands of the Imams.

Disown those who have become ungrateful to them. They are like those about whom God says, 'Don't you observe those who have denied the favours of God

1. The truth of this can become clear by studying the following Tradition: 'Yā 'Alī ana wa anta abawā ḥādhihi'l-ummah' i.e. 'O 'Alī I and you are the parents of this nation'.

and have become ungrateful and have thus led their people to hell-fire where they will burn forever. It is the worst imaginable place. They maintained that God had associates. They did so to lead people astray. Tell them, (O Muḥammad), enjoy ye this life of short duration. Your ultimate destination is hell.'

Last time I dealt at length with the explanation and the inner meaning of a verse from the Holy Qur'ān and now I am going to deal with the verse which follows the previous one. The verse is as follows: 'with regard to him who fears the *Raḥmān* in *ghayb* and comes to God with a penitent heart...'

The commentators say that the word *ghayb* means unseen. Here it stands for the world which is hidden from the people living in this world. The *Raḥmān* according to them is derived from *Raḥmat* and is synonymous with *Raḥīm*. But *Raḥmān* is applicable to none but God and *Raḥīm* is applicable to God as well as man. *Raḥmān* they say means the one who transforms a wicked man into a virtuous one when He wishes to favour him. The word *Raḥīm* does not imply all this. They say when it applies to man, sometimes he does show kindness and sometimes he does not. At times he is able to show it and at times he is not. There is a very subtle difference between these two epithets.

The Holy Qur'ān says: 'There are people who disdain from devotion to the *Raḥmān*. There is a tradition to the effect that these people believed in God but did not believe in the *Raḥmān*. If God and *Raḥmān* mean one and the same thing then there is no meaning in saying that they believed in God and did not believe in the *Raḥmān*.' This is one of the subtleties of the Holy Qur'ān which needs an elucidation. There is another verse in the Holy Qur'ān which says, 'When they were ordered to bow down to the one who you order us to bow to?'

We say that God is *Raḥmān*. *Raḥmān* is the most important of all the names of God. The names have forms which can be written down and effaced and the substance which they stand for. They are the symbols of realities. The *Ḥudūd* i.e., the Imams, are the spirit of the forms and the realities of the symbol.

The word *Raḥīm* from the point of view of its substance stands for the great *Ḥudūd* some of which are spiritual beings and others are in human form. It is through them that we can attain to the true knowledge of the Unity of God. It is through them that we can reach the Abode of Bliss. It is they about whom God says, 'And He taught Adam all the names and said to the angels, tell me what you know of their names if you think you are right.' It was the names of these *Ḥudūd* (authorities) which were taught to Adam and it was through the knowledge of these names that Adam established his superiority over the angels. Ṭabarī and other commentators like him who float on the surface and do not dive deeper say that these *asmā'* stand for horses, camels, donkeys cattle and sheep. They go to the length of mentioning all sorts of things including the wooden plates and utensils under the category of *asmā'*. Our *majālis* are above this rude and crude stuff. The *asmā'* stand for nothing else than the living *Nāṭiqs* i.e., spokesmen of God—the

Hudūd; and Allāh and *Raḥmān* also belong to this category. It is blasphemous to say that the *asmā'* stand for cattle and donkeys.

God has praised the one who fears *Raḥmān* in *ghayb* i.e., the one who knows the position of the *Hudūd* in this world of darkness and appears before Him with a penitent heart. We must bear in mind that the heart is the centre of human activities. It governs the body. The working of the body depends upon it.

Just as the arteries of the human body depend for the supply of blood on the heart, in the same way, in spiritual matters also we depend for guidance on the Imam of the time who is the heart of the *Sharī'at*. The Holy Qur'ān says, 'We shall show you our signs in the world and among yourselves in order that the truth may become clear to you.' In short, just as our physical existence depends on our hearts, our spiritual elevation depends on the Imams. The Holy Qur'ān says, 'There will come the day when we shall call every generation to appear before us with their Imams!'

May God make you fear God in *ghayb* and may you approach Him with your hearts directed to Him. This will suffice for this *majlis*. The rest of the verse I shall explain to you at the next meeting.

Lecture Third: The Meaning of *al-Salām*

O *mu'mins* [faithful ones], May God help you in listening with attention to what you hear from the Imam and in carrying out his orders. I appeal to you to fear God and be devoted to the Imams. If you are firm in your devotion to the Imams no harm will occur to you. Do not get frightened at the idea that on your death you will be shifted from bright rooms in your palaces to the dark and dingy tombs. To entertain such fears is a sign of the weakness of your faith. Let not the thought that your beautiful bodies will one day be reduced to dust, worry you in the least. When the precious pearl is out of the shell, there is no importance left for the shell. If it is broken to pieces nobody minds it.

You must bear in mind that it is only the vicious people who will be made to suffer in the grave. It is they who should fear and not you.

Look at the trouble your parents have taken from the days of your childhood in the growth of your bodies and in the improvement of your physical life on earth. But for the interest they took in you, you would not have been what you are. Your souls are a thousand times more important than your bodies. The Imams are your spiritual parents. Avail yourselves of a few days of life which are at your disposal here and look after your spiritual elevation under the care of your spiritual parents. Once you miss this opportunity, you will repent for ever. You will not be given a second chance to set things right.

O *mu'mins*, last time I explained to you the external and the inner meaning of the verse, 'He who fears *Raḥmān* in *ghayb* and approaches Him with the heart bent to Him.' Those of you who were attentive to what I said have profited by it and have seen for

themselves the way leading to salvation. Now I am going to explain to you the rest of this verse. It says, 'Enter it with *salām*. This is the day of perpetuity.' The word *salām* needs an explanation. The commentators say that it means 'safety'. They further say that *salām* is the greeting which the inmates of the *jannat* offer to one another. God says 'They will not hear in *jannat* useless or sinful talk. They will hear nothing but *salām*.' According to another verse God himself is *salām*. The verse says 'He who is the *salām*, the guardian of faith and the preserver of safety.' The *jannat* itself is called *dār al-salām*. The Holy Qur'ān says 'They have for them *dār al-salām* with God.'

When *al-salām* is used as an epithet of God, it means that God is safe from description i.e., He is above description in words and is much above even the subtlest thought which a human being can entertain of Him. All the attributes of God that can be uttered by tongue refer to the angels and the Prophet and the Imams. God is the Creator of them all. He cannot be described by the epithets which are applicable to His creatures. He is *salām* because of His safety from all this. In short, God is above human description.

The *jannat* is called *dār al-salām* because its inmates are free from diseases and defects and from changes from one condition into another which is the peculiar characteristic of the inmates of this world. If this definition which is the correct definition of the *jannat*, the Qur'ānic definition, is accepted and it cannot but be accepted, then it logically follows that the inmates of the *jannat* have no bodies composed of four humours and exposed to disease and decay.

This gives the lie to those who maintain that the human being will enter hell or heaven along with their bodies. May God give you the courage to follow the real faith and may He keep you away from the influence of those who twist and turn the meaning of the words of God.

Lecture Twelfth: The *Walāyat* of 'Alī

O *mu'mins* [faithful ones], may God help you in deriving the fullest benefit from the glories of this day. It was on this day that God conferred on us the highest of His favours. It was on this day that a great ordinance was issued by God which is the terminating point in the revelation of the religious laws. It was on this day that everything was made clear and the path was made smooth for the seekers of truth by the verse, 'I have perfected your religion. I have bestowed on you My highest favours. I have chosen for you Islam as a religion.'

At first the Prophet was reluctant to proclaim the ordinance to the people who he believed were prejudiced against it. A Qur'ānic verse made the matter clear and left no room for hesitation in his mind. The verse is as follows, 'O Prophet, deliver the message which has been revealed to you by your Lord. If you fail to do so it will mean that you have not delivered His message to the people. God will guard you against the people.'

There is no sect in Islam which believes that the Prophet fell short of delivering the message of God in such matters as the performance of prayers, the payment of *zakāt*, the fasting or going on pilgrimage or taking part in the *jihād*. We know well that he exerted his utmost in making the people offer the prayers which one cannot perform without undergoing some physical discomfort. He preached to the people to pay the *zakāt* and the people did pay, although one does not find it easy to part with money. The people were made to fast and we know well that in fasting one has to put up with unbearable heat and thirst. He exhorted the people to go on pilgrimage which one cannot undertake without undergoing all sorts of hardships. He ordered the people to join the *jihād* and they did so at the risk of their lives.

In short, he made no hesitation in the delivering of God's message in these matters. It was only the question of *walāyat* which worried him. It was the ordinance pertaining to the *walāyat*, the allegiance to 'Alī and the Imams from amongst his descendants that he was not prepared to proclaim. Finding the people burning with hatred and jealousy he hesitated to deliver this ordinance to them and he was waiting for a favourable time when the above verses were revealed to clear his doubts.

If someone were to suggest that the Prophet was not hesitating to deliver this ordinance, this stand will make the revelation of the above verse meaningless and superfluous.

These verses which lay emphasis on the delivery of the ordinance prove to us that faith in the *walāyat* is the cornerstone of our religion. If one does not believe in the *walāyat* and discharges all the primary and secondary duties enjoined on us by our religion, the performance of these duties will not help him in the least. His good deeds minus the belief in the *walāyat* will lead him to no other place than hell-fire. Belief in the *walāyat* of the Prophet is a pivot. On this hinges the whole system of our religious laws. If one has no faith in the *walāyat*, the duties laid down in our religion will lose the force of application on him. Hence, the performance or non-performance of these duties will make no difference in his case.

It must be borne in mind that after the death of the Prophet the belief in the *walāyat* of the Imams from his progeny is as important a part of our religion as the belief in the *walāyat* of the Prophet in his life time. This is supported by the Tradition according to which the Prophet is reported to have said at Ghadīr Khumm, 'Am I not more precious to you than your own selves?' This is an echo of the Qur'ānic verse which says, 'The Prophet is dearer to the *mu'mins*' than their own selves to them.' It is said, that in response to this question of the Prophet, when the *mu'mins* said 'Yes, you are dearer to us than our own selves', the Prophet said, 'O God, be witness to their admission'. After this he said, 'Alī is the master of one who acknowledges me to be his master. O God, love those who love 'Alī. Help those who help 'Alī. Desert those who desert 'Alī. Let the truth accompany 'Alī wherever he goes.'

NOTE: *Yawm al-ghadīr* is the day on which the Prophet declared Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī to be his brother on his return from his last pilgrimage which is known in history as *ḥajjat al-widā’*. This took place on the 18th of Dhi’l-ḥajjah when the Prophet and his followers on their return from the pilgrimage made a halt at Ghadīr Khumm.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, one the four Sunni Imams, has mentioned this incident in his well-known book *Musnad al-kabīr*. He quotes Barrā’ ibn ‘Āzib one of the *aṣḥāb* of the Prophet saying, ‘We were in the company of the Prophet when he halted at Ghadīr Khumm and led the congregational prayer. After finishing the prayer the Prophet took the hand of ‘Alī and raised it up saying, “Am I not dearer to the *mu’mīns* than their own-souls?” They said “Yes”. Again he said, “‘Alī is the master of the one who acknowledges me to be his master. O God, love those who love ‘Alī and hate those who hate ‘Alī.” After hearing this ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb went up to ‘Alī and said, “Congratulations to you, O son of Abū Ṭālib, you have become the master of every male and female *mu’mīn*.”’

Lecture Thirteenth: True Faith in the Unity of God Cannot be Achieved Without the Guidance of the Imams

The Holy Qur’ān says, ‘There are some people who say, “we believe in God and in the Day of Judgment” but in reality they do not believe.’ This is the characteristic of the hypocrites who do not profess what they believe in and do not believe in what they profess. By the words ‘we have faith in God and the Day of Judgment’ they intend to say that all their actions will be judged by God who will reward or punish them on the Day of Judgment. God has belied them by saying that ‘In reality they do not believe’, that is to say they do not speak the truth.

The knowledge of the oneness of God is beyond the acquisition of the human mind by itself. There are some people who maintain that they can acquire this knowledge by themselves without the help of the Prophet or the Book of God. They go a step further and say that if God had not sent the Prophets, in this matter they could have easily dispensed with their teachings. If they think that by means of their intellect they can know the Maker by seeing the things made and the Creator by looking at His creation, it is the height of insolence on their part. It is preposterous to imagine that a human being can acquire this knowledge without the help of the proper mediums namely the Prophets and the Imams. We know by experience that even the power of talking which is inherent in man and which is much easier for him to acquire than the knowledge of the oneness of God, does not develop in him without the help of a teacher. Although it is in his nature to talk and he has been provided by God with the necessary apparatus for it, he does not and cannot talk unless he learns to do it from someone else. If this is the case with his talking how is it possible for him to acquire the complicated knowledge of the oneness of God without the help of a Prophet or an Imam? It is impossible.

Those who maintain that they can know the Maker from the things made, forget that even this much knowledge which they claim to be self-acquired is based on their seeing and hearing things from one another. It is because of their hearing things from one another that they are able to say that there must be a builder when they see a house.

If a man were to grow up in a desert where he sees no house and hears nothing of this kind his intellect would not help him in coming to the conclusion that there must be a builder if he saw a house for the first time. This being the case it is as clear as daylight that the divine knowledge cannot be acquired without the help of the proper medium. This leads us to the conclusion that those people about whom the Holy Qur'ān says, 'They say we have faith in God and in the Day of Judgment but in reality they are faithless', are the people who do not believe in the mediums i.e., the *waṣī* of the Prophet and the Imams from his progeny. No correct knowledge of the oneness of God can be acquired without our referring to them. We cannot acquire a correct faith unless we seek the knowledge through them.

The Prophet has given us the outlines of the subjects which are dealt with in the Qur'ān. For the details we have to go to the Imams who are the masters of the subject. Had the Book been enough to teach us everything and solve all our difficulties independently of those divine agents who are the masters of this Book of God it would not have been necessary for God to tell us 'If they had referred the matter to the Prophet and to the spiritual heads from amongst them they, who are men of depth, would have explained it to them.' The 'men of depth' referred to in the above verse are the Imams from the progeny of the Prophet who possess the profoundest knowledge of the Book of God and the Tradition of the Prophet.

Lecture Fourteenth: The True Meaning of the Tradition, 'I am the City of Knowledge and 'Alī is its Gate'.

Every knowledge refers to the investigation of a fixed subject matter pursued by a fixed method. This view is supported by the verses of the Qur'ān and the Tradition of the Prophet. The Holy Qur'ān says, 'There is no righteousness in your entering the houses by their back doors; but righteousness lies in fearing God and entering the houses by their proper doors.' The words 'houses' and 'doors' used in the above verse are used figuratively. They do not stand for ordinary houses and doors. We know well that doors are meant for entrance. Had the words been used in their ordinary sense, there would have been no necessity for God to admonish us to do a thing which every one of us does in the ordinary course of affairs. The 'houses' and the 'doors' referred to in the verses are quite different from the houses and doors that we are familiar with. This is made clear by the well known Tradition of the Prophet which is as follows: 'I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate. Let those who want to acquire knowledge approach the city by its proper gate.'

After having proved by the verses of the Qur'ān and the Tradition of the Prophet that knowledge always refers to the investigation of a particular subject pursued by a particular method our next step would naturally be to find out the subject matter of the knowledge of which, according to the Tradition, the Prophet is the city and 'Alī is the gate. If we maintain that the subject matter is the prayer and how to perform it, or the *zakāt* and how to pay it, or the fast and how to observe it, then we cannot but admit that 'Alī's knowledge in this respect was in no way better or higher than that of those who had the opportunity of associating with the Prophet and attending his sermons. But it is not so. The knowledge mentioned in the Tradition refers to the philosophy of *ta'wīl*, the reconciliation between traditionalism and rationalism and the knowledge of *Hudūd Allāh*, the spiritual and physical laws. It is this knowledge about which the Prophet says, 'I am the city of knowledge' and about which the Qur'ān says figuratively, 'There is no righteousness in your entering the houses by their back doors.'

In short, 'Alī is the person who is well qualified in the knowledge of which the Prophet is the city and 'Alī the gate; and all those who have embraced Islam know nothing of this knowledge excepting those who have approached the *waṣī* of the Prophet and entered the city of knowledge by its proper gate. Those Muslims who do not approach this channel have only this advantage that their blood is unlawful for the Muslims to shed and their property is safe with them. The Prophet has divided the Muslims into two classes. He says, 'I have been ordered by God to fight on with the people until they say "there is no God but God and Muḥammad is the Prophet of God"'. When they say this their lives and properties are secure with us unless they do something which calls for punishment. They will have to settle their accounts with God'. This is the advantage that they will get from their embracing Islam. With regard to the second class of people the Prophet says, 'Those who say there is no God but God, with sincerity will enter the *jannat*.' On being asked as to what is meant by sincerity the Prophet replied 'It means the knowledge of the *hudūd* of God and the discharging of the obligation that one owes to them.' This refers to those learned Muslims who enter the city through its gate.

Lecture Nineteenth: He Who Knows Himself Knows His Lord

O *mu'mins* [faithful ones], may God confer His favours on you and may He guide you to the right path. Stick to the principle of reticence and stick to the Imams. If you do so, you will never go astray and you will enjoy the shade of the Ṭayyibah Tree. Its branches are overhanging your heads. Its blessings are always open to you, provided you know this and give serious thought to it. Thank God for the special favour that He has conferred on you by guiding you through the Imams and fear the day when you will be brought before God and when every one will be rewarded or punished according to his deeds in this life, the day when no in-

justice will be done to any one. The month of Rajab is gone and Sha'bān is come. It is a sacred month. Put on the clean dress of piety. May God bestow on you His mercy. May He help you in keeping your hearts pure. Do not keep your bodies clean and neglect your souls. Do not be deceived by the health of your bodies if your hearts are diseased. Keep aloof from the filth of worshipping idols and infidelity. Never tell lies. Seek guidance from those who have been pronounced by the Qur'ān to be pure.

Last time I spoke to you on a philosophical subject and now I am going to speak to you on a similar one. It is said that once the learned divine, namely Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, was asked by people to explain to them the meaning of the Tradition of the Prophet, 'He who knows himself knows God'. The divine said, 'You must bear in mind that man by nature belongs both to the physical and to the spiritual world. As far as his body is concerned he is like any other material body in this world. Every particle of it belongs to this world. The heat in his body belongs to the fire in this world. The flexibility of his body is due to the air in it. The humidity of his body is due to the water and the heavy mass of his body belongs to the earth. At the time of the dissolution of the body every particle of it goes back to its physical source to which it belongs. This is what we can perceive by means of our senses.

He has something else which can neither be perceived nor compared to anything that we find in this physical world. His being recognized as the noblest of all the creatures of God is not due to his physical body but to something else which is called the soul.

We know that the component parts of the body such as heat, humidity, flexibility and the mass have originated from sources such as fire, water, air and earth. We also know that on the dissolution of the body these component parts have to go back to the sources where they have come from. Moreover, we know that the only medium through which the human body can appear on earth is its parents. Besides, it cannot grow unless it is fed on the food belonging to this physical world.

Similar is the case with the soul. It cannot shape itself without the medium of its spiritual parents. It cannot develop unless it is fed on spiritual food. The spiritual parents are the *Hudūd* of God on earth. It is they who give a proper shape to the souls and feed them on spiritual knowledge and lift them up to the spiritual world. Their relationship with the souls is just the same as the connection of the human body with the four elements of this world.

Thus, he who reflects on the connection of his body with the physical world and its entire dependence on this world comes to the natural conclusion that the body is the creature of the Universe and the Universe is its Creator. On these lines when he goes a step further and thinks of the relationship of his soul with the *Hudūd* and its entire dependence for its development on them and of its final return to the source from where it has come he will naturally know the Lord of his soul and will realize the true position of the *Hudūd* of God on earth, namely the Imams. He

will further realize that just as the Universe is the master of his body the *Hudūd* are the masters of his soul. When he comes to this stage it is sure to dawn on him that God is unlike the bodies which are made of earth and that He is above being compared to anything in the physical world. It will further dawn on him that God is not only unlike his body but even unlike his soul which is like the saints of God and which belongs to the spiritual world. In other words he will realize that God is neither the body nor the soul. This is the meaning of the Tradition, "He who knows himself knows God".

O *mu'mins*, may God make you men of insight and confer upon you the last of His favours, the forgiveness of your sins. Praise be to God who is hidden from the knowledge of men and who is above imagination. Greetings be on His apostle, the best of mankind, Muḥammad who dispelled the darkness by the light of Islam and who invited people to the abode of safety. May there be greetings on 'Alī, his *waṣī* the Lion of God, the solver of our difficulties and the dispeller of our grief, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the master of philosophy and may the greetings be on the Imams from his choice progeny for ever. God is enough for us. He is the best pleader of our cause.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw

Abū Mu‘īn Nāṣir ibn Khusraw ibn Ḥārith Qubādiyānī, better known as Nāṣir-i Khusraw, was a prominent Ismaili dignitary of the Fatimid Caliph-Imam al-Mustanṣir bi’llāh’s time (427–487/1036–1094). He was a *dā‘ī*, a philosopher, a traveller, as well as one of the greatest poets of the Persian language. He was born in 394/1004 into a family of government officials and landowners. At the age of forty-two, in 437/1045, while he held an administrative post in Marv, probably at the court of Chagrī Bayg Dāwūd, a Seljuq prince, he experienced a drastic spiritual upheaval which resulted in his conversion to Ismaili Shi‘ism. Soon after, he began his seven-year journey and in 439/1047, he arrived in Cairo, the Fatimid capital, where he received proper instruction in Ismaili theology and was given the high status of ‘Ḥujjat of Khurāsān’ in the Fatimid *da‘wah* organization. Some five years later, in 444/1052, he settled in the valley of Yumgān in Badakhshān (in present-day Afghanistan), which was at the time ruled by ‘Alī ibn Asad, an Ismaili who had close relations with Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Until his death around 481/1088–89, he spent his life there propagating the Ismaili *da‘wah* and composing poetry and theosophical works. His fame as a great Ismaili spiritual philosopher has remained undiminished until the present day among the Ismailis of Iran, Afghanistan, China, Tajikistan and the northern areas of Pakistan such as Hunza, Chitral and Gilgit where he is also revered as a *pīr* (master). In Central Asia, his fame and popularity today are such that not only is his tomb in Yumgān kept as a shrine but also a great number of (most likely spurious) texts are ascribed to him and many of the local Sunni population claim descent from him.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw composed a number of philosophical and theological works, such as *Wajh-i dīn* (The Face of Religion) and *Gushāyish wa rahāyish* (Expansion and Liberation). But among his extant works that deal with philosophy, the most important is *Kitāb jāmi‘ al-ḥikmatayn* (The Sum of the Two Wisdoms). In the age of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, philosophy of Greek origin was repudiated as incompatible with revelation by Muslim jurists, Sunni and Twelver Shi‘i alike. Earlier Muslim

thinkers, such as Fārābī, had placed philosophy (which for him included the inner reality of religion) at the top, and Avicenna put philosophy and revelation on the same highest plain, whereas Nāṣir-i Khusraw held philosophy to be partial truth, the universal truth being revelation. This is the central idea expounded in the *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*.

All of the philosophical works of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, including this book, were composed in Persian. *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*, which is his main philosophical testament, was written in 462/1070 at the request of the Ismaili amir in order to explain to him a philosophical *qaṣīdah* by Abu'l-Haytham Jurjānī, an obscure Ismaili philosopher-poet (fourth/tenth century). The poem is composed of eighty-two distiches and contains eighty-one issues pertaining to Ismaili views on ontology, cosmology, epistemology, theology, hermeneutics of the Qur'ān and so on. Nāṣir-i Khusraw attempts to provide the solutions to these issues, which he presents in two ways—through philosophy of Greek origin, and through Ismaili theosophy—thereby trying to harmonize the two wisdoms through the method of *ta'wīl* (symbolic hermeneutics—literally taking a thing back to its origin).

In this chapter we have included three selections of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's works. In the first, there is a translation from the introduction to *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn* which explains why Nāṣir-i Khusraw composed the book. Its most important discussion is his theory that there is no conflict between philosophy and revelation. The passage also deals with his theory of correspondence between the several worlds. Nāṣir-i Khusraw attempts here to expound the dual meaning of the seven lights, one from the standpoint of the philosophers and the other, based on revelation, from the standpoint of Ismaili thinkers and to demonstrate that essentially there is no dichotomy between the two wisdoms. There is next a discussion of the spiritual hermeneutics of angel, *jinn* and devil in which Nāṣir-i Khusraw attempts to give the *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ānic concepts of these three categories of beings, as well as the views of the philosophers, again attempting to harmonize the two wisdoms. Lastly, the selection takes up the subject of the intellect and epistemology. There are two themes: the first deals with the difference between intellect and knowledge (Nāṣir-i Khusraw agrees with the philosophers that knowledge is an attribute of the intellect thereby demonstrating the superiority of intellect over every created thing) and the second with the difference between the perceiver and perception. The central idea is that the human intellect is incapable of comprehending its Originator, but it is capable of comprehending all originated things by receiving the light of God through its pure affirmation of His unity devoid of sensible and intelligible attributes.

The second selection is from Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *Gushāyish wa rahāyish* (Expansion and Liberation) translated by Faquir Muhammad Hunzai as *Knowledge and Liberation*. It consists of two parts, cosmogony and ontology. The section on cosmogony treats such issues as creation and eternity, generation and corruption

and whether or not God has a body. Among the subjects discussed in the section on ontology are different types of existents, the nature of the human soul and its relation to the body and substance.

The third selection consists of several philosophical odes. There is a long tradition of philosophical poetry in Persia of which Nāṣir-i Khusraw is one of the most illustrious representatives. In these poems Nāṣir-i Khusraw first discusses Divine unity, time, multiplicity and creation. He then moves to the problem of words and speech and in the third section to angelology. The fourth section is devoted to a discussion of free will and determinism and the fifth deals with the question of becoming.

S. H. Nasr

THE SUM OF THE TWO WISDOMS

Kitāb jāmī' al-ḥikmatayn

Translated for this volume by Latimah Parvin Peerwani from Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Jāmī' al-ḥikmatayn*, ed. H. Corbin and M. Mu'īn (Tehran-Paris, 1953), pp. 10–21, 104–107, 137–144, and 274–289. The numbers in parentheses refer to the pagination of the Corbin-Mu'īn edition, while items in square brackets are the translator's additions.

Philosophy and Revelation

On the reason for composing this book and [the meaning of] its name

(10) Abū Mu'īn Nāṣir ibn Khusraw ibn al-Ḥārith says: Praise be to God the Exalted, Whose remembrance is requisite for speaking about this book because this is a new book. Anything which is temporally originated (*ḥadīth*) has a cause. A temporally originated thing must have five causes: (i) efficient cause, for instance the carpenter who makes the throne; (ii) instrumental cause, such as an axe, a saw, etc., so that the craftsmanship of this carpenter manifests through those [instruments]; (iii) material cause, such as wood which receives the craftsmanship from the carpenter; (iv) formal cause, such as the form of the throne in the soul (*nafs*) of the carpenter; (v) final cause, which is the purpose for making the throne, and that is for making the king sit on it.

(11) The sages of real Religion (*ḥukamā-yi dīn-i ḥaqq*)¹ and philosophy are in agreement that the first cause is effect of the final cause. Because upon reflecting on the purpose of the throne [it is found that], it is for the sitting of the king. It is made by the carpenter through the instruments and the wood by the command of the king so that he would sit on the throne. So the final thing which manifests itself as the created thing should be the first cause of that thing. That is why the sages quote this famous saying, 'First reflection then action'. Don't you see that first the reflection of the carpenter is that the king should have the throne, and his final act is that the king should sit on the throne. [In the same way the question,] what is the purpose of the creation of this cosmos? That it finally manifests man and after him nothing is manifested. They said the purpose of the Creator of the cosmos [creating] this creation first was to obtain man, so from its creation finally man was manifested.

(12) In its appropriate place in this book we will explain about this meaning that for any book which is composed these five causes are requisite: (i) the

1. By *ḥukamā-yi dīn* Nāṣir-i Khusraw means the Fatimid thinkers.

efficient cause which is the author of the book; (ii) the instrumental cause which is the reed-pen and knife; (iii) the material cause, which is the paper and ink; (iv) the formal cause which is the discourse and address; (v) the final cause which is to make the knowledge in that book accessible to the seeker. The cause of all the causes is the final cause, about which we have already mentioned; it is more important than the efficient cause because whatever the composer of the book, the author of the meanings or the editor of the text does it is for the reason that the seeker of that knowledge, who does not know this [knowledge], has access to what he does not know. If justice means disapproval of violence to the oppressed, then making an ignorant gain access to knowledge is a greater justice because ignorance is manifest violence. If giving a share from whatever is accessible to us to a deserving person is a virtue (*iḥsān*), and if giving something from our wealth to our kinsmen is the command of God, then our kinsmen are men amongst all animals, so giving a portion of knowledge to them—which is a real human quality (*insāniyyat*)—is obedience to God, as He said to His Messenger in this verse in His words, ‘God commands justice, virtue and giving to kinsmen’ [Qur’ān, 16:90]. All these are the qualities of the Messenger. He cautioned us, ‘I perform these three acts because God has commanded me to do so’. That is why the sages have established five causes for the coming into existence of any thing. If at any time one of the causes is missing, then that event does not take place. I mean, if the carpenter has tools, wood, form of the throne [in his mind], but nobody wants the throne, then the carpenter will not make the throne; or if the carpenter is there, has tools, knows how to make the throne, and the king wants the throne but the wood, which is the material cause, is not there, then the throne cannot be made; or if four causes are there, I mean, the carpenter, the wood, the knowledge of the carpenter—the form of the throne—, and the king wants [the throne] but the instruments [for making it] are not there, then this invention which is the throne cannot come into existence.

(13) The sages of real Religion have said there are seven causes for any temporal thing to come into existence. Until all those seven [causes] are there that temporal thing cannot come into existence. [They are:] (i) efficient cause, I mean the artisan; (ii) instrumental cause; (iii) material cause; (iv) formal cause; (v) spatial cause; (vi) temporal cause; and (vii) final cause. [The fifth and sixth causes are also necessary because] an artisan makes his craft in space and time, hence these two are also the causes for the creation of a temporal thing. [Seven causes] are more proper [than five causes] because in the creation of the cosmos, too, it is apparent that the causes of the temporal origin of the existent things [and] the things born [i.e., minerals, plants, and animals] are the seven planets in seven spheres that govern the individual [existents]. They are the [cause] of the temporal existence of mineral, plant and animal [kingdoms] by the decree of the Almighty and All-knowing.

(14) Now we say 'It is due to the rational soul that man has superiority over the cosmos, and supremacy over the earth, water, air, fire, as well as land animals, so that he utilizes each one of them for his benefits'.

Those who are the leaders in Islam say whoever says 'I know that scammony [soap] soothes the nature of man', or 'I know that oxymel [mixture of honey and vinegar] pacifies bile', is an unbeliever (*kāfir*). How can ignorance be more powerful than this? A group of people is obsessed by *kuf*r. It is not in the nature of a physician to say, 'I have created scammony', nor would an astronomer say, 'I cause the eclipse of the sun'. If a physician who according to his knowledge says myrobolan (fruit, *ḥalīlah*) alleviates the pain of fever and bile from the natures is a *kāfir*, then someone who says that water alleviates the pain of thirst, and bread removes the pain of hunger, is also a *kāfir*. This is so because all things, whether they are medicinal [plants], food or water, are created by God. There is no limit to this aberration and *kuf*r in which most of the members of the *ummah* (Community) have fallen.

(15) We return to our discourse—the how and why of the things created in the universe by God the Exalted, and His placing the soul in man that is the seeker of how and why [of everything]. [The sages say,] there is a similarity between the eatable things created for the 'sensory soul' (*naḥs-i ḥissī*), [and the things possessing quality created for the rational soul]. That is because they saw man deriving taste from eatable things, and meaning from things having quality. The sensory soul does not become strong if it does not derive taste from eatable things, and the rational soul does not become strong if it does not derive meaning from things possessing qualities (*kayfiyyāt*) whether seen or heard. Just as the sensory soul seeks taste from food and drink, in the same way the rational soul seeks meaning in the things which can be seen and heard. The physical universe in its totality, from the rotating spheres and the stars of different magnitude, actions, colours, and motions, is the subject of inquiry (*mukayyif*). The things of the earth, such as, the substances, plants, and animals of different species, shapes, forms, tastes, colours, actions are also all subjects of inquiry and knowing for man.

Every [reflective] human soul desires to know why the heavens [or skies] rotate, while the earth remains stationary; why the sun shines constantly, while the moon is sometimes full, sometimes crescent, sometimes visible, sometimes hidden; why the earth is solid, while water is soft; why dried clay when mixed with water becomes soft, but if a stone and iron are mixed [the stone] does not become soft; why dried clay when mixed with water becomes soft, but when put in the fire becomes hard and turns into brick; why stone and iron remain solid in water but become soft in fire, and other things which he observes but does not know why they are so.

So, on the basis of the intellectual analogy and logical proof we say, the creation of these knowable things, and the bringing of this knowledge-seeking soul (*naḥs-i dānīsh-i juz'ī*) in man, the soul's insistence and greed for knowledge about those things is in accordance with the way God has created the human soul and

said to it. Ask and seek why such a thing is as it is, and do not imagine that this creation is vain. He Himself says this in His Book, this *āyāt* in His word, “They reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, “Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee. Preserve us from the chastisement of the Fire” [Qur’ān, 3:191].

Today, those titled as jurists (*fuqahā’ laqabān*) of the religion of Islam say, ‘If someone says, “The day appears by the rising of the sun”, or “I know which star moves and which one is fixed”, he is a *kāfir*’. They have preferred ignorance to knowledge and say, ‘we have nothing to do with the how and why of the creation’. The Messenger, on him be peace, said, ‘Reflect on the creation, but do not reflect on the Creator’. Since it is not permitted to reflect on the Creator, according to the ruling of this report (*khavar*) which we mentioned, it follows that reflection on the creation is necessary, according to what is mentioned in this report. That is because, if it were not permitted to reflect on the creation, as it has been on the Creator, then the creation and the Creator would have been equal. Speech emanated from the sacred prophetic soul and manifested through [his] thought which is the locus of the descent of the Trustworthy Spirit (*rūḥ al-amīn*), is indeed a veridical, strong, and logical proof [for reflecting on the creation].

(16) Whoever holds a belief that it is incumbent to seek the why and how of the creation, makes his knowledge seeking rational soul powerful over the land animals by the divine power, so much so that he makes everyone subordinate to him. Due to having such a soul, man becomes worthy of the divine Address. It—I mean the rational soul—is charged with the divine mandate to investigate the why of everything that he sees and hears from the things subject to inquiry, to seek for meaning from the categories (*maqūlāt*). Children asking their parents ‘what is that’ in order to know the names of different things and colours they see shows the soundness of our thesis—the human soul is naturally disposed (*majbūl*) to explore [for knowledge]—and is our evidence.

But since the child is small and [intellectually] immature, he becomes satisfied by hearing the name of that thing, and does not investigate what is the act of that thing, and what is its use, for the meaning of a thing is its real name. Also, the children’s asking for the names of things indicates that Adam, on him be peace, was first informed about the names of things through divine teaching. So his descendants seek the names of things in the beginning, as God the Exalted said in His word, ‘And He taught Adam all the names’ [Qur’ān, 2:31].

The Ḥashwiyān¹ of the *ummah* (community) said that God the Exalted taught Adam the names of everything He had created, so by knowing those names he attained supremacy over the angels because they did not know the names of things.

1. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī lists this group under the category of Sunni literalists, c.f., *al-Milal wa’l-niḥal* (Cairo, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 105–106; also, cf., A. S. Halkin, ‘Ḥashwiyā’, *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 54 (1934), pp. 1–28.

This explanation is very superficial and meaningless because if someone, for instance, sees [the fruit] myrobolan and knows that its [name is] myrobolan, and another person [sees it who] does not know its [that] name and says its name is not myrobolan but it is called the pear, [in this case] none of the two has superiority over the other because both of them do not know the act of myrobolan, nor the purpose for which it is used, nor how much of it should be eaten. If one of the two knows its action, its usage, and how much of it should be eaten then that knowledgeable person has superiority over that ignorant due to knowing the action of myrobolan. So by simply knowing the names of things a person does not attain superiority over others because the same thing is called by an Arab by one name, by a Turk by another name, by an Indian by another name, by a Greek by another name, by an Ethiopian by another name. But the meaning of the action of that thing to which these groups give different names is one meaning.

(17) So we have proved that what the commentators [of the Qur'an] explained [regarding Adam] that God the Exalted is All-Wise and All-Knowing, [and] He taught His chosen one—who was Adam, peace be upon him—the names of the things so that by [knowing those names] he attained superiority over the angels, is absurd and erroneous.

The sages of the Religion said 'The real names of the things are their meanings and actions. God the Exalted taught Adam, on him be peace, those names so that whatever he saw in the universe he knew its action and its benefit for himself and for his descendants.'

Every kind of science, such as medicine, astronomy, etc., has been discovered by a prophet through divine teaching (*ta'lim-i ilāhī*), which that prophet [had learnt] from Adam.¹ And Adam, they said, by [knowing] those names which were not the verbal names, and were taught [to him] by God through inspiration became superior over the angels.

(18) The '*ulamā*' of the real Religion hold the sciences of medicine and astronomy as proofs for affirming prophecy to the philosophers who deny prophecy and revelation. They [i.e., the '*ulamā*' of real Religion] say, 'Whoever is the first one to know, for instance, that a certain medicine can be made from [the mixture of] a drug growing in Rome, a drug brought from China, a drug brought from India; that one [drug] should be of the weight of a grain, another of the weight of one drachma, the third one half a grain in weight; that one [drug] should be pounded, one should be melted, and one should be burnt; then all of them should be mixed together and given to a [sick] person for curing such-and-such illness must necessarily be a prophet. For it was God Who "taught" him where man's benefits lie, and the cure for the diseases through those things in that much measure. Otherwise

1. This view prior to Nāṣir-i Khusraw was maintained by the Ismaili thinker Abū Ḥātim Rāzī (d.c. 322/933–34); cf. his *Kitāb a'lām al-nubuwwah*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Ṣāwī and Ghulām-Riḍā A'wani, English preface by S. H. Nasr (Tehran, 1977), pp. 273–318.

nobody would have been able to know those drugs, neither through experiment nor through tasting them.

They also say, 'The person who was the first one to discover that out of some myriads of stars, which we see in the sky, seven are planets; then he recognized the course of each one as well as its act and nature must be a prophet who by [direct] divine teaching knew this high science'. So by the religious argument and the argument from their [philosopher's] science, the affirmation of prophecy becomes requisite.

Today, a group [of philosophers] whom God has created for bringing together the science[s] has declared the divine act of origination [of the Creation] (*ibdā'*) futile. Whoever considers the [divine act of the origination of the] creation futile becomes a *kāfir*, as He says in His word, 'And We have not created the heaven and the earth and all that is between them in vain. That is the conjecture of those who deny the truth (*kafarū*). And woe unto those who deny the truth, from the Fire!' [Qur'ān, 38:27]. This is the reason for the dominance of ignorance over the majority.

(19) Since those titled as '*ulamā'*' (*'ulamā' laqabān*) have denounced the one who knows the science of the created things as *kāfir*, the seekers of how and why [of a thing] have become silent, and the exponents of this science have also remained quiet, so ignorance has gained mastery over the people, especially the inhabitants of our land of Khurāsān, the region of east. The prince of Badakhshān, 'Ayn al-Dawlah wa'l-Dīn, Zayn al-Millah, Shams al-'Ūlā, Abu'l-Ma'ālī, 'Alī ibn Asad'¹ says in this context,

Verse:

The pride of the learned is in learning and culture,
 The pride of the ignorant is in dress and garment,
 The culture and learning of the cultured are now
 Contemptible, for how many are still cultured!
 The worthless are at the helm; the gratifying accomplished
 Ones kept at distance,
 None knows the cause of all these but
 The One Who is the Giver of causes.
 So says 'Alī ibn Asad: This world is full of sorrow and trouble.

(20) No one has written a book on the how and why of the creation, because out of the five causes, which we have shown earlier to be necessary for composing any book, the first one, the seeker of this knowledge, who is the final cause, has ceased to exist. Secondly the exponent of this knowledge, who is the efficient cause, has

1. Amīr of Badakhshān, an Ismaili who had close relations with Nāṣir-i Khusraw; cf. *EIR*, vol. 1, p. 848.

also passed away; and with the disappearance of these two causes from among the people of this land, [the science of Religion] has vanished. None has remained in this land, which we mentioned, who is capable of harmonizing (*jāmi'*) the science of true Religion, which is a product of the holy Spirit, with the science of creation, which is a branch of philosophy. For the philosophers relegate those titled as '*ulamā'*' to the rank of beasts, and hold the religion of Islam in contempt on account of their ignorance [of the science of creation]; while those titled as '*ulamā'*' declare the philosophers *kāfir*. As a result, neither the true Religion nor true philosophy has remained in this land. As long as a philosopher is not religious [he cannot harmonize the science of creation and the science of true Religion].

When I came to this land [Khurāsān] from the sacred presence of Imam Mu'adh Abū Tamīm,¹ the true Imam, the descendant of the chosen Messenger, the vicegerent of his ancestor, the treasurer of the wisdom of the All-Wise and All-Knowing, on him and on his pure ancestors and noble descendants be the benediction of God, I had already studied the works of the men of learning in philosophy, and was the custodian of the science of true Religion which is the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and inner meaning (*bāṭin*, or the objective) of the Book of *Sharī'ah*.² ... In 406 A.H., the Amīr of Badakhshān known as 'Ayn al-Dawlah Abu'l-Ma'ālī 'Alī ibn Asad al-Ḥārith—sent me a *qaṣīdah* in which Khwājah Abu'l-Haytham Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī,³ may God have mercy on him, had questioned about certain things ... He requested me to resolve those issues raised [in that *qaṣīdah*] ... I became happy and thanked God the Exalted, because in this period when most of the people have turned away from the real Religion, the market of wisdom is in debt, and the constitution of those upholding the *Sharī'ah* is corrupt, I found a great man who could combine the worldly authority (*wilāyat-i duniyawi*) with the recognition of the stages of religious authority (*wilāyat-i dīn*), and whom worldly power and inheritance do not keep away from seeking religious knowledge, insights and truths.

(21) Since the efficient cause of this book was ready which was myself, and the formal cause was also ready which was the forms of knowledge imprinted in [my self], then the instrumental and material causes became existent, and the final cause was attained in such a great seeker [of knowledge, the Amīr of Badakhshān]. I was in a stable fortified place, so only the need for time remained, [which materialized] when the composition of this book became necessary.

1. Fatimid Caliph-Imām al-Mustanṣir bi'llāh (427–487/1036–1094).

2. For the Ismaili concept of *ta'wīl* cf., I. K. Poonawala, 'Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ān', in A. Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 199–222.

3. A obscure Ismaili philosopher-poet and the author of an Ismaili philosophical poem whose questions were the subject of at least two commentaries by the Ismaili thinkers, (1) Nāsir-i Khusraw's *Kitāb jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*; (2) Muḥammad Surkh Nayshāpūri's *Sharḥ-i qaṣīdah-i Abu'l-Haytham Jurjānī*. This work has been edited by H. Corbin and M. Mu'in (Tehran and Paris, 1965).

Since this book is based on solving the difficult issues of the Religion and the problems of philosophy, so I named this book *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn* (The Book Harmonizing the Two Wisdoms). In it I have spoken to the sages of Religion with *āyāt* from the Book of God the Exalted, and reports of His Messenger, on whom be peace, and to the sages of philosophy and accomplished logicians, with intellectual demonstrations and premises resulting in happy conclusion, for wisdom's treasure-house is the 'heart' (*khāṭir*) of the Seal [i.e., Muḥammad], the heir of the prophets, peace be upon them, and a scent of wisdom is also [found] in the books of the ancient [sages].

On the Seven Lights

Distich 9

Seven lights radiate their lights so that,
Each being accepts the fire from each one
According to the measure of its subtlety.

(104) The opinion of the sages of philosophy on the celestial lights and the subtlety that reaches from them to the 'mothers' (*ummahāt*, i.e., elements) is that any subtle quality that appears in the 'mothers' [i.e., the elements] is manifested from the higher world. As for the higher world, they said, it transcends the celestial spheres. They also maintained that these seven governing planets are like the apertures of that world to this world. The light and subtlety flow from that world [to this world] in equal [measure]. However, these bodies from which the light reaches here differ in nature, so the receivers of light and subtlety in this world are also different due to their disposition and the place [they occupy]. This is the reason why every [terrestrial thing] differs in light and subtlety. They said that all the fusible substances aspire to become gold, and all the congealed substances aspire to become a red hyacinth. However, because their dispositions and the places [they occupy] are different, so a disposition that becomes purer and accepts the effects [of the light and subtlety] completely becomes gold and ruby. The one whose disposition is defiled and murky does not reach [the level] of gold and ruby. The substances are of different kinds, such as, copper, lead, iron, etc., and chrysolite, garnet, amber, etc.

They held the same view concerning [the diversity in] plants and animals. The light and subtlety from the higher world do not reach in equal measure to all the things [in the world] because the luminaries are of different magnitude and nature. The dispositions of things [in this world] are different, and the places [they occupy] are different. The motions of the spheres around the mothers [or elements] are also different. So the place of the earth that is below the zone of the sphere, the compo-

nents of the sphere move very rapidly over there, and that motion is [like that of] a water-wheel. Another place of the earth is below the pole. There the components of the sphere move very slowly. That motion is [like that of] a millstone. This is the reason, they said, why the bodies, that have a crystal-like disposition in having subtlety, transparency and luminosity, shine. Then there is a disposition that is dark, opaque and obscure [so it does not reflect light]. Some fruits become sour and red like jujube. They gave example of foods such as meat, bread, etc. to show that [although] the subtlety and light come in equal measure [from the luminaries] they become different in the receivers. So when an intelligent man consumes it, his acumen and comprehension increase, but if a mouse consumes it then treachery and plundering become manifested in it. If a dog eats it then evil temper and aggression toward man become manifested from it. So they established that these differences among existent things are in respect of the receivers and not in respect of the difference of the world. For example, by means of fire an egg is cooked, wax is melted, a stone is broken to pieces, and a brick is hardened.

(105) The response of the people of interpretation (*ahl-i ta'wīl*), peace be upon them, concerning the relation of the seven lights to the realm of *ibdā'* (origination) is, anything that exists in the sensible world is an effect (*athar*) of something that exists in the higher world. That is because, we see that in the sensible world there are seven lights, and the things born [here, i.e., the three kingdoms] receive light and subtlety from them. These luminous existent things indicate that in the higher world there are seven pre-eternal, primordial lights, that those pre-eternal [lights] are the causes of physical lights.

Those seven pre-eternal lights, they said, are: first, the [primordial] origination (*ibdā'*); second, the substance of the Intellect; third, the totality of the Intellect consisting of three dimensions: intellection, intellect and intelligible. No other existent thing has this characteristic but the Intellect. It knows itself, and its essence [or self] is known [to it]. Fourth is the Soul which has emanated from the Intellect; fifth is *Jadd*; sixth is *Fath*; and seventh is *Khayāl*.¹ In the exoteric *Sharī'ah* [the last

1. Nāṣir-i Khusraw does not explain what he means by the three hypostasis; *Jadd*, *Fath* and *Khayāl*. But an early Ismaili work, *Kitāb al-iftikhār* by the Fatimid thinker Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī (d. ca., 386/996) furnishes us with some explanation. *Jadd*, according to the concept of Sijistānī, means fortune (*bakht*). When it helps a person at his birth, he continues to ascend from one status to another until he reaches the status of a great king. When it helps a morally pure person, he becomes the lord of the people of his epoch, governing them, holding sway over them and not them over him, he rules over them and not them over him, and he guides them according to the divine Pleasure and Knowledge. *Jadd* becomes a mount for him to ascend to the celestial realm of his Lord, inspiring him with what is needed by him in the divine Law for his Community, making it easy for him to compose it in the language of the people of his time. *Fath* (lit. opening) is another power bestowed upon the fortunate one (*majdūd*) by which he can interpret the ambiguities (*mutashābihāt*) in the revealed divine Law. *Khayāl* (imagination) is the third power bestowed upon the morally pure person, by which he can 'imagine' what will happen to his community after his death, and what the Imams after him should inherit from his purity and subtle qualities

three degrees] are called Gabriel, Michael and Seraphiel. The seven planets—the sun, the moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury—in the physical world are the effects of those subtle things and roots (*uṣūl*) which are the originated things (*mubda'āt*). In the microcosm, which is man, the traces of those primordial substances are also seven. They are: life, knowledge, power, perception, act, will, and perpetuity.

(106) Each man receives a share from those seven primordial substances—those seven essences (*ma'nī*) that we mentioned—according to the measure of the receptivity of the substance of his soul, just as each of the seven physical substances of the mine receives a share from the seven planets according to the measure of the receptivity of its physical substance. A soul may be at the level of prophethood, just as a metal may be of the level of gold. A soul may be at the level of being the *waṣī* [legatee of the prophet], just as a metal may be of the level of silver. Just as metals are of seven kinds: gold, silver, iron, copper, tin, lead and mercury, in the same way there are seven levels in the *da'wah*: Messenger, *Waṣī*, *Imām*, *Hujjat*, *Dā'ī*, *Ma'dhūn* and *Mustajīb*.¹ Just as each of the metallic substances receives a share from the light and subtlety of the physical planets according to the measure of the receptivity of its substance and disposition, in the same way the substances of men too, have a share from the primordial pre-eternal lights, according to the measure of the receptivity of the substance of [man's] soul. Though all the metallic substances are not gold, [yet] each one of them receives a share from the lights and the subtlety of the physical planets due to which it separates from the level of the simple [elemental] natures.

(107) According to man, who is the sovereign of the world, each of these substances [i.e., metals] has a place according to its [metallic] degree, but each one is associated and connected with gold which is the noblest of all the metals receptive to form by receiving a form. In the same way, though all men are not at the level of prophethood, yet each member of the *da'wat-i hādī*, has received a share from the subtlety of the [primordially] originated lights—the intellectual planets. By receiving that share and subtlety, he has separated from those people who are at the level of simple [elemental] natures and physicality.

Each member of the *da'wat* has a degree and 'locus' with the Universal Intellect, the sovereign of the higher realm, due to its [Intellect's] affinity and connection with the Messenger—the most eminent in receiving a share from that light which has reached him completely, because the followers of the Messenger are [part] of

so that they can protect the Religion and govern the community according to the revealed divine Law with the help of those powers. Cf. Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, ed. M. Ghalib (Beirut, 1980); for the analyses of these three hypostasis cf. H. Corbin's introduction in French to *Kitāb jāmi' al-hikmatayn*, pp. 91–112.

1. For the Fatimid *da'wah* hierarchy, cf. H. Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis* (London, 1983), pp. 84–99.

the Messenger, according to what God the Exalted narrated about Abraham, peace be upon him. He said in his prayer this *āyat* in His word, ‘whoever followed me is part of me’ [Qur’ān, 14:39].

In short, according to the ruling of this decisive and explicit divine Word, the followers of the chosen Messenger, peace and benediction upon him and [his progeny], who after following him followed his progeny (*‘itrat*), and did not follow the strangers, and after the [Messenger] did not turn back are part of the Messenger. As the Messenger said to his *waṣī*, peace be upon him, in this report, ‘Ali is part of me and I am part of ‘Ali’.

Just as in the [astronomical] firmament of the world seven lights are famous whose names we have already mentioned, in the same way in the firmament of Religion there are seven famous lights: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, and the Lord of the Resurrection [i.e., Qā’im or Messiah], peace be upon them and upon him. This is a logical demonstration based on the ‘contradictory premises’ (*muqaddamāt-i khulfi*). According to His word, ‘Only those who have knowledge will comprehend them.’ [Qur’ān, 29:42]

On Angel, *Parī*, and Devil

Distiches 14–15

Angel, *parī* and devil, I have learnt exist,
And absolutely they do exist, but repeat what
And how [are they]. Speak! Fortify your answer
With logical proof if you wish to extricate
This topic from its veil.

(137) This man says, ‘I accept the existence of angel, *parī* and devil, but this acceptance without logical proof is not enough.’ So, [he says], tell me what each one of it is, and how it is, in these words, ‘Repeat what and how they are. Fortify your answer with logical proof.’

The essence (*māhiyyat*) of a thing is the *whatness* of a thing, and that is the investigation about the genus of a thing. Whereas its quality (*kayfiyyat*) means its *howness*, and that is its shape and colour if it is a body, and attribute and act if it is not a body. For example, if someone says, [‘this is] a tree’, and someone else asks, ‘What is a tree?’ This question pertains to his inquiry about the genus of a tree. Its answer would be—if some vegetation [of the genre of the tree] has grown there—‘The tree is of this genus’. If there is no [vegetation] there, then the answer to him would be, ‘The tree is a body that is subject to growth; it transforms soil and water to another form’. If someone asks, ‘what is the mode of a tree?’ The answer to him would be, ‘Its one end is deep in the soil and the other end is in the

air, and it has many branches and leaves'. This is the meaning of *what* [and] *how* which he has asked in this distich.

(138) The philosophical, intellectual response [of the sages of philosophy] to someone who asks, 'What is an angel?' is the celestial bodies of the heaven are the angels. They are alive and intelligent, and operate in the universe by the command of God. Thābit ibn Qurrah al-Ḥarrānī,¹ who translated philosophical works out of Greek script and language into Arabic language and Arabic script, was of the opinion that the spheres and the stars were alive and intelligent. Basing [his thesis] on logical proof, he said, 'Man has life and rationality because his corporeal body is the noblest [of all the corporal bodies]. In the noblest corporeal body, which is the body of man, the noblest soul has descended and that soul is alive and rational'. This is a correct premise. Then he said, 'The bodies of spheres and stars are noble, subtle and extremely pure'. This is the second correct premise. The conclusion deduced from these two premises is, the spheres and planets should have very noble souls, since the soul that is very noble is the rational soul. So these spheres and planets have rational souls, therefore they are alive and intelligent. This is the logical proof given by this philosopher that the spheres and stars are angels and they are intelligent.

(139) The philosophers do not accept [the existence] of *parī*, but they accept [the existence] of devil. They say 'When the souls of ignorant and wicked people separate from [their] body, they remain in this world. That is because they exit from their body with sensible and concupiscent desires. Those desires attract them [to this world] so they cannot transcend the [world of] natures. Such a soul enters a hideous body; it traverses the world; it lures people; it prompts them to [commit] evils; it leads people astray in the deserts to destruction'. This is the substance of what Muḥammad Zakariyyā' Rāzī² says in his *Kitāb-i 'ilm-i ilāhī*. [He states:] 'The souls of the evil doers who become devils appear to a person in some form, and order him to go and declare to people that an angel has appeared to me and said, "God has bestowed prophethood upon you, and I am that angel". [Such a declaration] creates disagreement among the people, and many are killed due to that soul that has become a devil'. We have already refuted the theory of that impudent, disillusioned man in [our] *Būstān al-'uqūl*, so we will not take up time on this occasion to respond to this disillusioned man's [theory]; otherwise we will digress from what we intend to explain. So this is the theory of the philosophers on angels and devils.

1. Thābit b. Qurrah (d. 289/901) a pseudo-Sabaeen astrologer-philosopher from Ḥarrān in north Syria who translated many Greek and Syriac works into Arabic. Cf. M. Fakhry: *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (London, 1983), pp. 3, 15, 17.

2. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā' Rāzī (d. ca. 313/925) the famous Muslim physician and philosopher has been the target of criticism by many Muslim thinkers including the Ismaili thinkers for his denial of the necessity of prophecy. Cf. Abū Ḥātim Rāzī's *Kitāb a'lām al-nubuwwah*, note 3.

(140) The response of the *ahl-i ta'yīd*¹ (People of Divine Inspiration, or Divinely Assisted) to this question is, 'we say on the command of the Treasurer of the knowledge of the Book of God and the *Sharī'ah* of the Messenger, peace be upon him and on his vicegerent, an angel is a separate [immaterial] spirit. It is created by God by His act of origination (*ibdā'*) through the intermediary of the Intellect, Soul, *Jadd*, *Fath*, and *Khayāl* which are exoterically known in the Book and the *Sharī'ah* as the Pen, Tablet, Seraphiel, Michael and Gabriel [respectively].² The primordially originated beings (*mubda'āt*) have two roots, Intellect and Soul, and three branches, *Jadd*, *Fath* and *Khayāl*. The created physical existent things [also] have two roots, the 'fathers' and the 'mothers' (*abā' wa ummahāt*), I mean, the stars and spheres, and the natures [i.e., the four qualities: hot, cold, wet and dry]. Those born from these are also three: mineral, plant and animal. The last [in the animal kingdom] is man. The microcosm of the Religion² too, has two roots, Messenger and *Waṣī*, and their three branches, *Imām*, *Hujjat*, and *Dā'ī*, and the branches born of each member are multiple in number.

(141) So the angels are primordially originated, separate [immaterial] beings. Their existence is due to their act. Their act is manifest in the spheres and stars. The light and the power of the spheres and stars, who are visible and not audible angels, are from those primordially originated angels. The divine purpose in decreeing these created visible angels is to obtain the angels *in potentia* in man. These potential angels are brought to actuality by the Messenger and his *Waṣī* through the Book and the *Sharī'ah*. Just as the stars, the visible [angels], are intermediary between the actual primordially originated angels and the potential angels who are men so that they bring them to the state of manifestation, in the same way the Prophets, *Awṣiyā'* (pl. of *Waṣī*) and Imams are intermediaries between the potential angels, humankind, and the actual angels, the primordial divinely originated beings, so that through the Book and the *Sharī'ah* they transform people to actual angels. Whoever can transform a potential angel to an actual angel has already reached the level of angelicness, and is the vicegerent of God on the earth. As He said in His word, 'And had We willed We could have set among you angels to be vicegerents in the earth' [Qur'ān, 43:60]. That is the reason why God has commanded us that after having faith in Him, the Sublime, we should have faith in His angels, His Books and His messengers, as He said in His word, 'Each one of the believers believes in God, and His angels and His Books and His prophets' [Qur'ān, 2:285].

(142) God the Exalted has mentioned two groups of people from His creation whom He has created for His worship, one is *jinn*, which in Persian language is

1. The term *ta'yīd* (lit, support, aid) is used by Nāṣir-i Khusraw in a very specific sense to denote divine guidance originating from the divine Logos (*kalimah*). This *ta'yīd* is granted by the *kalimah* to the Universal Intellect, which then grants it to the Universal Soul to aid the latter to attain its own perfection. The Universal Soul with the aid of *ta'yīd* creates the souls of the real human beings who then become the recipients of *ta'yīd* and are thus called by Nāṣir-i Khusraw *ahl-i ta'yīd*; cf. Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Shish faṣl*, ed. and tr. W. Ivanow (Leiden, 1949), p. 74.

2. The text reads microcosm (*'ālam-i ṣaghīr*), which may be an error by the copyist.

called *parī*, and the other is *ins*, i.e., humankind. He said in His word, 'I created *jinn* and humankind only that they might worship Me' [Qur'ān, 51:56]. He did not say, 'I created devil (*dīw*)'. Rather, He said, the devils were *parī* [*yān*] but they became disobedient so they became devils due to sinning against their God according to this *āyat* in His word, 'When We said to the angels "fall prostrate before Adam", they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He was of the *jinn*, and he rebelled against His Lord's command' [Qur'ān, 18:50].

So the reason for the existence of devils, according to the ruling (*ḥukm*) of this *āyat*, is the existence of man, because He says that Iblis, prior to being commanded to obey Adam, was from the [group of] *parī*. So the created things are of two categories: man and *parī*. *Parī* is divided into two categories: angel and devil, i.e., among the *parī* [*yān*] whoever remained obedient [to God] became an angel, and whoever was disobedient became a devil. He did not make any distinction between angel and *parī* in the Book. He only said, 'Since a *parī* became disobedient, it became a devil'. So He placed angel and *parī* on the same level according to this *āyat* in His word, 'When We said to angels, fall prostrate before Adam, and they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He was from *jinn*', i.e., 'We said to the angels to prostrate before Adam. They all prostrated save Iblis. He was from *pariyān*'. From this *āyat* it is evident that [Iblis] was [initially] a *parī*. So whoever was obedient [to God] became an angel, and whoever was disobedient [to Him] became a devil. Thus it is quite clear that the cause of a *parī* becoming an angel is obedience [to God], and the cause of a *parī* becoming a devil is disobedience [to Him]. Now the obedience and disobedience to God are through the intermediary of the Messenger according to what He said in the narrative of Adam, 'since Iblis did not obey Him, he became a devil though he was an angel'.

(143) So, it follows that the Messenger is messenger for both *parī* and man as He says in the real Book in His word, 'Say, it is revealed unto me that a company of *jinn* gave ear, and they said "Lo! We have heard a marvellous Qur'ān that guideth unto righteousness"' [70:1–2]. In another place He said to His Messenger, 'We sent toward thee a group of *pariyān* so that they hear the Qur'ān. They said, "Give ear!" When they had heard it, they went back to their people and said "O our people! respond to the caller of God"'. This He said in His word, 'We sent toward thee a member from the *jinn*, who wished to hear the Qur'ān and when they were in its presence, said "Give ear!" and when it was finished, turned back to their people, warning' [46:29]. In another place He said, 'Say "O mankind! I am a messenger of God unto both (*jamī'an*) of you" [7:158], i.e., man and *parī*. The word *jamī'an* includes both *parī* and man. This word also indicates that *parī* is from among mankind because [the Messenger] said, 'O people, I am a messenger of God to you both, i.e., mankind and *parī*'. In the chapter *al-Raḥmān* also, He addressed [both to mankind and *pariyān*] thirty-one times in the form of reproach, saying, 'O mankind and *pariyān*! Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you accuse

the Messenger of lying?’ And, ‘Which is it, of the favours of your Lord that you deny?’ [55:13 ff.]

From these verses it follows that the Messenger was the messenger [of God] for both mankind and *pariyān*.

(144) It is necessary to know that people are of two kinds in the world of Religion (*‘ālam-i dīn*): *pariyān* and humankind. *Pariyān* are of two categories: whosoever among them remains obedient [to the Messenger’s message] exits from this world as an angel, and whosoever turns away from the obedience exits from this world as a devil.

Among the multitude it is known that a *parī* has a beautiful face, and a devil has an ugly face. Since the devil’s ugliness is due to [its] disobedience, so it follows that the beauty of the *parī* is due to [its] obedience. However, this beauty and ugliness are due to the ‘belief’ [i.e., obedience or disobedience]. Moreover, the form [of *parī* and devil] is spiritual and not physical.

According to the multitude the *pariyān* are hidden from the people. The Arabic word for *parī* is *jinn*. ‘*Jinn*’ [in the Arabic language] means ‘hidden’ (*pūshidah*). Thus it follows that in the *ummah* of the Messenger there is a group which is hidden and another which is manifest. Those who are hidden are potential angels, and whoever [from this group] leaves this world in the state of obedience [to the Messenger’s message], will become an actual angel. Whoever is disobedient [to him] is a potential devil, and when he leaves this world he will become an actual devil. Those who are manifest are potential *pariyān*, and until they do not become (actual) *parī* [*yān*], they are not potential angels. Whoever is not a potential angel, cannot become an actual angel. Thus, whoever from this manifest group becomes a *parī*, becomes hidden from the others so that by being a *parī* he may become an angel. This we said is a similitude for exotericists (*ahl-i zāhir*) and esotericists (*ahl-i bāṭin*). Whoever transcends the exoteric [or the external dimension of the Book of the *Sharī‘ah*] and understands [its] inner [meaning or objective] is like a man who becomes a *parī* and becomes beautiful in form.

According to the Messenger, peace be upon him, two classes of people are devils: those who turn away from the hidden dimension [of the Book of the *Sharī‘ah*], the *Jinn*-devils belong to this category, and those who turn away from the manifest [i.e., the exoteric dimension of the Book of the *Sharī‘ah*] in order to enter its hidden dimension. Human-satans belong to the latter category. God the Exalted said, ‘Thus We have appointed unto every prophet an adversary—human-satans and *jinn*’ [Qur’ān, 6:112].

We say: The rational soul in every person is a potential angel, and a potential angel is a *parī*, as we said above. The concupiscent soul and irascible soul are the two potential devils in each person. The person whose rational soul brings his irascible and concupiscent [souls] under its obedience, becomes an angel, while he whose concupiscent and irascible [souls] bring his rational soul under their

obedience, that person becomes an actual devil. The chosen Messenger, upon him be peace, said: every man has [within him] two devils that deceive him. This report is: 'In every man there are two satans who tempt him.' From this report it becomes evident that a man has a rational soul, which is one, and he has two devils, i.e., the concupiscent soul and the irascible soul. Then they asked [him], 'O Messenger, do you also have these two devils?' He replied, 'I [also] had two devils (*du dīw*), but God gave me victory over them, so I made them surrender (*musalmān*) [to my rational soul].' The text of the report is, 'I had two Satans (*shaytānān*), but God gave me victory over them so I made them surrender (*aslama*).'

So we have made it clear that in man there is an angel and a devil, but he himself is a *parī*. The devil is not created by God. Rather its existence is from its disobedience to Him. The *pariyān* are potential angels and can become actual angels if they persist in the obedience [to Him]. In the same way, the [potential] devils can become actual devils if they persist in disobedience. Human beings are potential angels and potential devils, while that world is replete with actual angels and actual devils.

This is an exhaustive and clear exposition on [angel, *parī*, and devil].

On Intellect and Epistemology

Distiches 50–55

One problem has risen like in the game of chess;
 From everyone its answer must be sought.
 Is intellect superior or knowledge?
 Which one of the two has eminence over the other?
 About these two I have heard excess equal to
 one hundred ass-loads.
 How can a person have knowledge if he has not
 learnt it?
 A carpenter cannot do carpentry without his tools.
 A person who has not suffered humiliation
 while learning will not have
 a great access to the glory of knowledge.
 Because they do not know the definition of
 intellect nor of knowledge,
 they speak extravagant things about
 the two without hesitation and reserve.
 From their knowledge they reason
 the knowledge of God. Surely they have become
 unconcerned about the true course.

(274) This question concerns the difference between the intellect and knowledge, and that out of the two which one is superior. He further says 'If a person has not suffered humiliation during instruction and learning, he has not attained the honour of knowledge.' He also says that knowledge is that which must be acquired, and criticizes a person who judges God's knowledge from his knowledge. However, none says to him that since you maintain, 'knowledge is that which must be acquired', that means you are saying, either that God is not the knower, or that He has learnt the knowledge. But, he has removed himself away from this accusation. These six distiches which we have stated contain one question.

(275) The response of the sages of philosophy to this question is; there are two categories of perception (*idrāk*), either a certain thing is perceived by itself, or it is not perceived by itself. A thing which is perceived by itself is sensible, an object of sight perceived by the sense of sight; an audible object perceived by the sense of hearing; an object of smell perceived by the sense of smell; an object of taste perceived by the sense of taste; and an object of touch perceived by the sense of touch. However, a thing not perceived by itself is not sensible; rather it is intelligible. The substance of the soul is not sensible because it is perceived through its activity; it moves the body in diverse ways, i.e., either by the motion of speech, or by the motion of walking or working, etc. Since this substance cannot be perceived by itself but by its act which is manifested through the body, [the sages of philosophy] called this substance the object of knowledge (*ma'lūm*). They said that only the intellect which being superior to the soul can perceive it, because it is superior to it, for a thing is perceived by something that is superior to it. Do you not see that only the intellectuals have proved that the soul is eternal, immaterial, and an active substance? By this knowledge the intellectuals have become secure from [the fear] of annihilation of the soul. The ignorant fear death because [they presume] that after the physical death, which is the separation of the soul from the body, they will not have [their] being. [The sages of philosophy] maintain that it has been demonstrated that the soul is the object of knowledge, and is intelligible and not sensible, and we perceive it through [our] intellect. Therefore, we infer [lit, learn] that knowledge is an act and effect of the intellect, and intellect is more eminent than its effect.

(276) Plato's opinion on the knowledge and will of God is, as he said 'We do not say that the First Agent has will (*irādat*) or that it does not have will, because it has manifested the will in the soul'. It is not admissible to say that God has manifested the will by another will. Because if so, then the other will too must have been manifested by another will, in which case the wills become *ad infinitum* having no final will. Since the soul has will, and it is the object of knowledge, it is inadmissible [to conceive] that the Originator of the soul has the will, because the will pertains to the soul.

(277) He also said, 'We do not maintain that whatever He creates, He does so out of knowledge, i.e., He first has the knowledge [of the thing], then He creates it,

because Intellect is His intelligible (*ma'qūl*), and our knowledge is from the Intellect. So it is not admissible that God creates knowledge through knowledge; [the very idea] is absurd, because things are made [or created] through knowledge; but knowledge is not made through knowledge. Since we have some knowledge, and our knowledge is from the Intellect, we deduce that Intellect is created by Him. These are the postulates of Plato concerning the will and knowledge of God, and Intellect.

(278) The Iranian [maybe the Greek] philosopher has made a distinction between *ma'rifat* (innate knowledge) and *'ilm* (science). He says '*ma'rifat* is that which is unvarying in man from the time of his childhood to his old age'. For example, the *ma'rifat* of thirst, hunger, fear of something that he does not know, or the *ma'rifat* of shapes, colours and other sensibilia, and the *ma'rifat* of pain and [other] things that man knows by nature (*bi-ṭab'*) but the names of those things he must learn from someone. For instance, he does not know this is a piece of paper which they name white [paper], and the lines written on it they name black [lines] etc. Many animals which are completely formed also share *ma'rifat* with man.

(279) He said, 'Whatever skills, professions (or crafts) man learns through reflection (*tafakkur*), inspiration (*ilhām*), revelation (*wahy*) or from others, whether willingly or out of constraints, all this is called '*ilm*'. [It spans the range] from language to professions, to philosophy. People differ in professions and sciences. Then he says, '*ma'rifat* is the basis of intellect, mind is the basis of remembrance, and possibility (*imkān*) is the basis of power (*qudrat*)'.

(280) The response of *ahl-i ta'yīd*, peace be upon them, concerning the distinction between intellect and knowledge is as follows; they say, 'The definition of '*ilm*' is, "the concept of a thing as it is". The definition of '*ālim*', i.e., the possessor of knowledge is, "a person who conceives the thing as it is". They say, 'The definition of '*aql*' (intellect) is, "it is a simple [not composite] substance by which people perceive things". They maintain life (*hayāt*) is the custodian of the body, the rational soul is the custodian of life, and the intellect is the guardian of the rational soul. [It is the intellect] which gives nobility to the soul to recognize its substance. Knowledge ('*ilm*') is the act of the intellect. Man perceives things as they are by the intellect. Therefore man is called intelligent ('*āqil*') because he has something by which he perceives things as they are. This attribute, i.e., the intelligent ('*āqil*') is not admissible for God because He is the Originator of the Intellect. This attribute is applied to man when we say, 'so and so is intelligent'. They [i.e., *ahl-i ta'yīd*] qualify God as Knower though '*ilm*' is an attribute of the Intellect, but [according to them] it is an attribute of God metaphorically (*bi'l-mathāl*), as God said about His attribute, 'The Knower of the hidden and the manifest' [39:47], but this is an attribute of the Intellect which knows intelligibles and also sensibles. Since the Intellect is a gift of God to us which is denied to other animals, it is not proper to qualify God the Exalted by an attribute which has been given by Him [to man]. Therefore, when anyone among the knowers of real knowledge ('*ilm-i haqiqat*') qualifies God as the

‘Knower’, he means, He is the Originator of the Intellect, and knowledge is the act of the Intellect. And [if] he says, ‘He is Powerful’, he means the power of the powerful men is from Him; likewise the [power of] creativity has been given by Him to the creative. ‘So blessed be God, the best of creators’ [Qur’ān, 23:14].

On the Difference Between the Perceiver and Perception

Distich 56

Between the perceiver and perception
a distinction should be made by someone who
has awakened from the sleep of heedlessness.

(281) In this question he inquires about the difference between the perceiver and perception. The third [act] which is the object of perception has not been included in the enquiry.

Perceiver means someone who perceives a thing, perception, i.e., *andar yāftan*, is his act, and the object of perception is something that is perceived. This [query] is like this: if someone says, ‘make a distinction between the agent (*fā’il*) and the act *fi’l*, the agent is the one from whom the act is manifested, for instance, a carpenter. His act is carpentry [the knowledge of] which is in his soul; the bed is something in which [his act of] carpentry has become manifested. So the sages have maintained that the act is intermediary between the agent and the object of act (*maf’ūl*). The act is either in the agent itself *in potentia*, or in the object of act itself in actuality. So, the act cannot stand by itself, i.e., the [skill of] carpentry is hidden in either the soul of the carpenter, or it has manifested [from the carpenter’s soul] in the bed itself [by the carpenter]. In the same way the perception which is the act of the perceiver is hidden in either the perceiver, or it is manifested [in the perceiver by perceiving] the object of perception. The perceiver is the substance of the soul of man and his perception of things is through the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. So the soul has five powers. It perceives five kinds of objects of perception by these powers. Each of these powers has a place underneath that instrument which is [like] a vein.

(282) One of the powers [of the soul] is the sense of sight. Its place is in the centre of the pupil of the eye underneath the transparent membrane. Whoever looks into the eye of a person, he sees his own face [in a mini form]; due to this reason it is called ‘a small man’ (*mardumak*) of the eye. That is because the perception of the objects of sight such as colours, shapes—[imprinted] on the natures—and motions are perceived by the soul through this power which, as mentioned earlier, is underneath that mine. This power accepts physical forms, and transmits them to the universal sense (*hiss-i kullī*) which is the soul. The soul through the intermediary

of this power recognizes them, conceptualizes them, and distinguishes them [from other forms] in order to know to which thing that colour and form pertain.

(283) The other power of the soul is hearing. Its place is in the orifice of the ear. It perceives [all kinds of] sounds having sense or no sense. Contrary to the objects of the sense of sight, the form of sound and speech is invisible waves. Whatever this sense perceives from its objects of sense, it transmits to the comprehensive sense that is the soul, so that it distinguishes them.

(284) The other power [of the soul] is taste. Its place is beneath the skin of the tip of the tongue. It perceives tastes. What the [sense of] taste perceives is different from those two senses mentioned earlier. This sense also transmits its perception to the soul who is the lord of these powers.

(285) The fourth power of the soul is smell. Its place is in the nostrils after the membrane behind which is the brain. This sense perceives smells that neither are the objects of sight, nor hearing nor taste. Whatever this sense perceives from its perceptions, it also transmits to the soul which is the universal sense.

(286) The fifth power of the soul is touch. It is dispersed throughout the body. It is more intense under the skin and on the tip of the fingers. [This sense] perceives things which are soft, rough, in motion and repose, hot and cold. Whatever this sense perceives is different from what the other senses perceive. This sense also transmits its perceptions to the soul who is the universal perceiver.

Thus we have explained that the soul has five powers for [receiving] five kinds of perceptions. The act of each of these powers in its object of perception and sensation is its perception, and whatever is its object of sense (*maḥsūs*) is its object of perception.

(287) We say, 'It should be understood that when each of these perceptive powers perceives the object of its perception, then by its act of perception it becomes the object of perception. For example, when the eye looks at a thing which has colour and shape its power of sight accepts that colour and form separate from matter; it becomes that colour and form in order to perceive it. So this sense of sight which is the active agent (*fā'il*) becomes the object of act (*maf'ūl*) by its own act. That is because that object of sight remains in the same state after the seer has seen it whereas the state of the seer who accepts that colour and form is transformed. Thus we have demonstrated that the perceiver, i.e., the subject who perceives, becomes the object of perception through his [act of] perception; his state transforms whereas the object of perception remains in the same state.'

(288) The reason this subtle point has been explained is: a group of people maintains that we can perceive (*andar yābīm*) the Originator of the Intellect by [our] intellect. [If so] then the Intellect would become the active agent, and its Originator, the Sublime, would become its object [of perception], but that is absurd. We have demonstrated to intelligent people by this rational argument that the Intellect perceives its Originator by pure affirmation [of His unity] without any

sensible and intelligible attributes. The Originator, the Real, the Sublime, is not the object of perception of the Intellect. Rather, the Intellect receives the nobility and light [of the Sublime] by the light of perceiving Him by pure affirmation. So the passivity is on the part of the Intellect and not God, the Sublime, the Exalted. This is a categorical response by the intellectual will for this question.

(289) The sages [of real Religion] have said, time is threefold: one is present, such as, today, this hour; the other is past, such as, yesterday, day before yesterday; the third is future, for instance, tomorrow, day after tomorrow. The temporal things are also threefold. They have also said the eye is an instrument for perceiving something that is present today; the ear is an instrument for perceiving something that was yesterday and in the past. Reflection (*fikrat*) is an instrument for perceiving (*idrāk*) a thing that will be tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. They said, 'The Intellect is an instrument for perceiving the [primordially] originated things (*mubda'āt*) and not [their] Originator. To God belong praise and benevolence'.

KNOWLEDGE AND LIBERATION

Gushāyish wa rahāyish

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Cosmogony

1. *On the Creator and the created*

[4] O brother! You asked about the Creator (*āfarīdigār*) and the created (*āfaridah*), and you said that it is inevitable for the Creator to be prior to the created. However, you wanted to know whether or not there was time between the Creator and the created; 'Was He not Creator and Sovereign prior to what He created? [And] if there was no creation, what was He Creator and Sovereign of? If He became Creator and Sovereign when He created and brought forth His sovereignty, is He now better and greater than when He was neither Creator nor Sovereign? [If that is the case], now that He has originated the creation and is different from what He was before the creation, then the term 'generated' (*muḥdath*) necessarily applies to Him because that whose condition changes is generated. We wish that this subject be explained with demonstration, so that we know what our belief about it should be. Peace!

[5] O brother! Know that this inquiry is extremely difficult and many people have lost their way in it, because there are treasurers of divine knowledge, and

whoever does not have recourse to and seek the truth from them is drowned in the ocean of falsehood. [Such a person] opposes this well-known and famous saying among Muslims of the Holy Prophet: ‘Say, *Lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bi’Llāhi*’-‘*aliyyi*’l-‘*aẓīm*’ (There is no power and strength except in Allah, the High, the Great)’. And he who does not have recourse to the Imam of his time, who does not seek knowledge of the truth from him, and who relies on his own power and strength, is a wrong-doer.

[6] O brother! I will untie this knot for you by the command (*farmān*) of the lord of the time (*khudāwand-i zamān*) and, by his power and strength, I will destroy the ambush of the devil which he has placed on this path and show you the straight path. Just as there is a measure and balance for hidden knowledge which is measured and weighed for me, so I will measure that knowledge [for you] with the measure of justice and will weigh it on the balance of truth. As, God has said in this sense ‘Woe to the miserly who, when they receive measure from the people, take full measure, but when they measure or weigh for them, do skimp’ (83:1–3).

[7] We say that first it is necessary to know what time is so that this knot can be untied. It should be known that in reality, time is [contained in] the act (*kār-kard*) of an agent (*kār-kun*), because it is [a measure of] the movement of the [celestial] sphere. Thus, when a measure [equal to] a constellation passes from the sphere, we say that two hours from night or day have elapsed, and when half of the sphere passes we say twelve hours of time from day or night have elapsed. [However], if you take away the sphere from [your] imagination, nothing remains of time. When the existence of a thing depends on another thing, then if you remove the latter, the former which had come into existence through the latter [also] disappears. For instance, if we remove the sun from [our] imagination, the day would be removed. From this demonstration it is evident that if from the imagination you remove the sphere, time [too] would be removed. [In reality], since the rotation of the sphere is the act of an agent by the command of the Creator, time is [caused by] the act of the Creator Himself.

[8] In this connection, those in possession of wisdom have also said that time is nothing but [a measure of] change in the conditions of body, one after the other. This view is the same as that of time being [contained in] the act of an agent, because the totality of [the world’s] body is within the vault of the spheres, and when the spheres rotate its condition changes as every point of it moves from its existing place to another place. [Furthermore], the rotation of the spheres does not stop because its time is never-ending.

[9] It is inconceivable for the simple [person] that time can be removed from the imagination. This is because of the fact that since the human soul is linked with a body which is under time, it cannot go beyond [time] without being nurtured with the knowledge of the truth. As God says, ‘O assembly of *jinn* and men, if you can penetrate the bounds of the heavens and the earth, do so, but you cannot without

the proof' (55:33)—that is, *jinn* and men cannot conceive anything in their souls other than what they see in the heavens and the earth, and they cannot go beyond what is under the heavens and time unless they receive nurture [of true knowledge] from the Imam of the time who is the proof of God (*ḥujjat-i Khudā*) on earth.

[10] Since in reality time is [a measure of] change in the condition of the body which is the heavens, it is [caused by] an act of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Thus, from whichever aspect you seek the truth about time, you will find that it is [contained in] the act [of an agent]. When you know this, you will realize that it is absurd for someone to ask whether or not there was time between the Creator and the creation. This is because [on the one hand], when he declares that the Creator has to come before the creation, while time itself is in the creation as we explained, it is tantamount to his affirming that the Creator exists before the creation; [on the other hand], when he says that there was time between the Creator and the creation, it is a contradiction because it amounts to saying that there was time before time, which is similar to saying that there was creation before creation, and this is absurd.

[11] As for your assertion regarding the Creator and His sovereignty before the creation, that if He became Creator and Sovereign after [establishing His] creatorship and sovereignty [of the world], then He is different from what He was before the creation, it should be known that both the Creator and the creation in their entirety were in the Command of God (*amr-i bārī*)—purified and exalted is He—and in their state of existention nothing was prior or posterior. The Command of God is not a part of Him, but a trace which is like a writer's script, in which there is nothing of his essence. Since God's ipseity [essence] is above matter, instrument, power, form, likeness, and act, His Command is to be understood in the sense that it is self-subsistent, and all existences and existents are contained in it.

[12] Since the soul of the writer dwells in the turbidity of body and the darkness of nature, the writing which is a trace from him cannot come into being by itself and is incapable of existence, unless he seeks help from nature for the provision of paper, ink-pot, pen, place, time, and movement to bring forth his trace. But since God is free from matter and form, all existents came into being together [and] simultaneously from His Command which is a trace from Him. The Creator and the creation, the Sovereign and sovereignty, all of them were in that trace without there being any connection with His ipseity; just as writing has no connection with the soul of the writer who, after having written something, remains intact without increase or decrease. Thus, the Sovereign in a true sense is the First, that is, the First Originated Being (*mubda'-i awwal*) with which the Divine Command immediately became one, and that is the First Intellect (*'aql-i awwal*), which is complete in both actuality and potentiality. The Creator and agent [of creation] in reality is the Universal Soul (*nafs-i kull*) which, in relation to the Universal Intellect (*'aql-i kull*), namely the First Intellect, is like a thought of the rational soul.

[13] Thus, the Creator and creation, the Sovereign and sovereignty, are all in the Divine Command which has no connection with God's ipseity. The rational proof of this statement is that whatever appears in this world, such as plants and animals, come into being by the aggregation and mixture of the elements, the support of time, and the concurrence of space. The fact that all these things support one another shows that all of them are originated from one entity, just as multiplicity has originated from the number one. Had all the above-mentioned things, such as the elements, time, and space, not originated from one entity, they would not have supported but opposed one another. Since all of them work with and support one another, they all execute one command. Thus, first there has to be a command, then those who execute the command.

[14] It is evident, therefore, that all existences and existents were gathered together in the Divine Command, all at once from nothing, without there being any priority and posteriority over one another. And the Divine Command—to bring it close to the imagination—is like a date-seed in which appears all at once and in no time what [subsequently] appears on the tree, such as its leaves, branches, roots, wood, filaments, thorns, dates, and so on. If some of these things had not been in the date-seed, then the date-palm would not have [been able to bear] leaves, branches, wood, or filaments. If these essences (*ma'nihā*) had not been in the date-seed, nothing would have come from it and it would have remained unripe, without growing; but when it ripens, all essences appear in it. This is a proof of the fact that all those essences of the tree came into existence together in that seed all at once and in no time. When such things are perceptible to the senses, then the Divine Command, which does not need the support of anything, more deserves to have all existents [gathered] in it without time and space, whatever it does. As God says, 'Our Command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye' (54:50)—that is to say, the existential or coming into being of time and space is [instantaneous] like the seeing of light by the eye. Thus, just as in a date-seed what comes into being all at once comes forth in time, similarly what has gathered together and come into being in the Divine Command in no time, instantaneously and from nothing, comes forth by the act [of the Creator].

[15] [As for] the generated, in reality it originates from a thing, whereas that which originates from nothing is called the eternal (*qadīm*). In reality the eternal is the Divine Command from which all things come into being. Since we have established that the term 'generated' (*muḥdath*) is not applicable to the Divine Command, then it is more befitting for it not to be applicable to [God] who originated it. [As for] the creature (*makhluq*), it is that which receives help and power from something else. In reality the [first] created being is the Universal Soul whose help (*māddah*) comes from the Divine Command through the mediation of the [Universal] Intellect. And the generated is this physical world, because the generated is that which is susceptible to generation, that is to say, to

states such as movement, rest, increase, and decrease, which are all found in the physical world.

[16] It is therefore evident from the explanation which we have given that the Creator, the creation, and the creature were all in the Divine Command. God's ipseity has no connection or disconnection with them because He is free from [all] association, [because] a thing which is associated with another thing does not befit God. The attribution of creatorship and sovereignty made to God is not because He is the Creator and Sovereign, but in the sense that the existence of the Creator and Sovereign is from His Command, and all existents are attributed to Him in order to glorify Him—just as when a man commands others to build a mansion, it is built by carpenters and other workmen, yet it is not said that they made it but that this mansion was built by so-and-so, whereas he did no work except to command. Such should be the belief regarding the creation of the world, the Creator and the created, so that the soul may be liberated.

2. *On the eternal and the generated*

[17] O brother! You asked that of two entities between whose existence there is no time, how can one be prior to its companion? You stated that it follows reason that if there is no time between the existence of two entities, then both are either eternal or generated. The difference between the eternal and the generated is that the former is prior to the latter in time, just as a tree [may be regarded] as eternal and its fruit as generated because the tree is prior to the fruit—all analogies of the eternal are like this. And when time is removed between two entities, priority and posteriority cease to exist between them; both of them are either eternal or generated. [And you said,] 'Since you have already established that there was no time between the existence of the Divine Command and all [other] existents, and whatever God willed came into being in it all at once, then the world and the Divine Command are both eternal. However, no one can deny that first there has to be an agent [worker] and then [follows] the work. It is necessary that you explain how it is possible to be prior and posterior without time so that we believe in it and know the reality of that completely.'

[18] Know, O brother, that the question should be asked according to the right principle (*qānūn*). It is correct to state that if there are two entities of which one does not precede the other [in existence], then both are either eternal or generated. But it is not correct when you say that if one of the two entities does precede the other in existence and there is no time between them, then [both have to be either] eternal or generated. There is no need to apply the status of being eternal or generated to them if, as you have already asserted, one of them precedes the other as a worker precedes his work and there is no time between their existence. This requires a proof (*burhān*). However, if what you mean to say is that in the absence

of time between the two entities, one cannot be prior to its companion, this rule (*qā'idah*) is [also] not correct, because if one were not prior to the other, then both will have to be either eternal or generated—otherwise your statement would have been correct. If one of the two entities does not precede the other in time, it is [still] necessary for one of them to be eternal and the other to be generated; and if one necessarily precedes the other, it is not necessary [to postulate a duration of] time between them; and if time is not necessary, they should not be judged as eternal or generated, because there are entities among which time is inconceivable.

[19] Take the example of a man who works for an hour and then rests for another hour: there is no [passage of] time between [the end of his] work and [the beginning of his] rest. But everyone knows that one first attends to work and then to rest, and whoever denies this and says that work is not prior to rest, then it is deemed not worthy of discussing with him; or if he says that there is time between work and rest, he would have spoken absurdly. By this explanation we have refuted the assertion of the one who says that if there is no time between the existence of two entities, then both are either eternal or generated, because it is known that work is prior to rest, and the rest comes after it. [In this analogy], to work is to be eternal and to rest is to be generated, even though there is no [passage of] time between these two states.

[20] It becomes clear [therefore] that the Creator of the world is eternal and the world is generated without necessitating any time between them. The benefit of this inquiry for you is to know that time is not necessary between the Creator and the creation, and that the Creator precedes the creation without any time. If the priority or precedence which the Creator has over the creation was due to time, then the last of that time would have been the origination of creation; and if the end of that time were to be known, then the beginning of time would also be necessarily established. The beginning of time would then be the beginning of the existence of the eternal and if the beginning of the eternal were to be established then [the Creator's status] of eternity would cease and He would become generated. When the reader of this book throws this question back at his adversary, he should have reflected on what we have said and the importance of this inquiry.

3. *On time before the creation*

[21] O brother! You asked, 'Since you have established that the Creator is eternal and the world generated, and the eternal is that which does not have a beginning, whereas the generated has a beginning, thus affirming that the world has a beginning, tell us why the Creator who is omnipotent delayed in the creation of the world, and why did He not create before He [actually] created it? As it was necessary [for Him] to create in wisdom because God is always wise, why did He not start earlier as there was none to prevent Him [from doing so]? And when

God had not yet created the world, what prompted Him to create it, whereas before it there was nothing? According to reason, if someone is able to do a good work but does not do it, this is considered bad on his part; and if he is unable to do a good work, he is either prevented from doing it by someone else or he does not know how to do it—but God is [free] from constraint and ignorance. And if someone does not do a work for a long time and then does it, there is something that has prompted him to do it, whether it is his own thinking or another thing. But God is free from both these states in the creation of the world, because He was there [before the creation] and there was nothing and nobody [other than Him]; and He is independent of thinking, of accepting the plan or seeking the counsel of someone else. Then what was the delay in the creation of the world till the appointed time or period when He created it and what was the reason for it? Explain!

[22] Know, O brother, that a period (*waqt*) means a state between two times. When someone says 'now' (*aknūn*), this 'now' is a period, which means that it gives an indication between what has passed from time and what is going to appear from it in the future. The state of 'now' is intermediary between these two times, and in reality time itself is [a measure of] change in the state of body. You come to know from the creation of the world that time is change in the state of body, and that when there is no body, there is no time. It is evident therefore that when there is no time there will be no period, and there will be neither priority nor posteriority, because first there has to be time for there to be priority and posteriority, period and nonperiod, just as [when] an attribute is predicated of a thing, if the thing does not exist, there will be no attribute as well. Since a period is between two times, that is the past and the future, as morning is a period which is going to come and night is a period which has elapsed, if we remove day and night from the imagination, the period will also be removed.

[23] The period between two times, the past and the future, is like the space (*gushādagī, farākhī*) between two lines, of which each one is a boundary that limits [the space]. But if the line is single, it cannot be a boundary limiting a thing because this space, which is called surface (*saṭḥ*), does not come into existence without two lines or by one line which is brought back from one end to [join] the other. It is not possible to know the measure of what is on both sides of one line, just as [the number] one has no limit, and nobody can describe its features in the same way as two is described as one upon one; that is paired with each other, or three as one united with two.

[24] The answer to this question is implied in our response to the previous inquiry. Since we have made it clear that the world comes after its Creator without there being any time in between, [and] having established that there was no time before the creation of the world. It is absurd for someone to ask why God delayed in the creation of the world until the period He created it, because this period itself

came into existence as a result of the creation of the world. If the creation of the world is called prior or posterior, it is called so in a metaphorical sense and not in a real sense—otherwise, the question will continue [*ad infinitum*]. Thus in reality the period itself, is [embedded in] the origination of the world, just as the dimensions of a body are the surfaces of it. This explanation will be grasped quickly by a clear thought, and be comprehended and understood by a bright mind. Peace!

4. On whether God has a body

[25] O brother! You asked, ‘The anthropomorphists say that God is a body, and [to support this view] they argue that whatever activity we see in the world is all done by bodies, whether these be the diverse works which people do or other things which animals do but man is unable to do. Such [is the work of] the bee which makes a beehive out of mud and honey from flowers, or the craft of silk-worms which turn mulberry leaves into silk, or oysters which make pearls from rain-water. Likewise is the work of plants, of which each one does a thing which man is unable to do, such as the date-palm which makes dates from dust and water, and every plant produces a thing which is different from its form. All these in their entirety are bodies. When the wise see such craft (*ṣanʿat*), they testify that it is created by a powerful agent, and if someone denies this his argument is not accepted. Since the entire world is a craft based on wisdom, and because all these crafts are produced by bodies, it follows that the Maker of the world is [also] a body. And they say that if the Maker were not a body, these bodies would not have admitted the craft from Him, just as if a carpenter [did not have] a body, the wood would not be able to admit his craft. The same is the case with [all] other crafts. This is a clear and bright demonstration. What proof should we posit before them that the Maker of the world is not a body? Find the answer to this problem and prove it!’

[26] Know, O brother, that in this world there does not exist a [single] body which is a maker, neither animal nor plant, because the maker in reality is the soul, and the body is like its instrument. The soul has three levels: one is the vegetative soul (*rūyandah*), the second is the animal soul (*khwarandah*), and the third is the rational soul (*gūyandah*). [Now, anything] which has species cannot dispense with a genus. There can be many species [under a genus], such as the animal is a genus and its species are birds, reptiles, and wild beasts. When we realize that the soul has three levels, we come to know that it [too] has a genus, which is the source of all the souls [that is, the Universal Soul]. [Since] we find the rational soul to be the most noble of the [three levels of] the soul with good and diverse deeds, we come to know that it is capable of receiving knowledge (*dānish-padhīr*) from the universal soul.

[27] As for the function of plants and animals, it is based not on knowledge but on their [specific] properties. A property is that which belongs to a thing

[or species] to the exclusion of other species, such as [the act of] smiling and [the phenomenon of] hair turning grey are the properties of man that no other animal has. Similarly, to make honey or silk are the properties of the bee and the silk-worm respectively. Every plant and tree is characterized by its grain and fruit, without which it cannot produce anything else, such as the growth [of foliage] in plants and trees. Man has [the capacity for] many crafts. All crafts, whether natural [innate] or voluntary—such as the crafts of the bee, the silk-worm, the oyster, and the plant which are natural, and those of man which are voluntary—all of these are sought by the soul and not by the body. When the soul [in a body] wants to produce a craft which it knows on [another] body, it can do so with the help of that body which is compatible with it and admits its craft because of similarity [between the two bodies]. However, if the soul wants to produce the craft within itself, it does not need the mediation of a body and can produce it by itself [in imagination]. For instance, a carpenter who knows how to produce a door can conceive it within himself without time, instrument, and the mediation of a body; his soul does not need a body to produce it. [Since] we find that the craft belongs to the soul and the world admits its craft, we come to know that the maker of the world is the Universal Soul and that these three [levels of] the soul which we mentioned are its species.

[28] Every maker requires six entities to produce his craft adequately: firstly, his body; secondly, the matter upon which he produces his craft, such as wood for a carpenter and iron for an ironsmith; thirdly, the instrument, like axe and saw for the carpenter, or anvil and hammer for the ironsmith; fourthly, movement—and from his need for movement to produce his craft it becomes evident to the wise that a worker is not free from need, [because] the one without need does not work; fifthly, a place in which to produce his craft: and sixthly, a time in the duration of which to complete his craft. When these six are attained, the craft will be the seventh of them, which is the purpose of the six entities. Thus the craft of the Universal Soul in this world, [consists of] the plant and animal [kingdoms]. The plant is the cause of the animal and the animal is its effect. The cause is that which, if it is removed, the effect too is removed; for instance, if you remove the plant, the animal is removed because the animal depends on the plant for nourishment. But man is not the cause of anything else; rather he is the purpose [of creation], and his goal is the recognition of God so that he may return to the [original] source from where he has come.

[29] Therefore, we say that the primordial maker is the Universal Soul which has attained those [six] entities already mentioned. The first thing it has attained, instead of body, is the great imperishable sphere [of the heavens]; the second, instead of matter, are the four elements, namely earth, water, air, and fire, from which it produces plants and animals; the third, instead of instruments, are the seven planets, through which it makes shapes, colours, and splendours for plants

and animals; the fourth, instead of place, is this vast space within which is contained the universal body; the fifth is the endless movement visible in its body which is the sphere—this great motion is also evident to all in its instruments which are the planets, and in the four elements which take the place of matter; the sixth is the moveable time which passes successively until it produces the seventh, which we see [manifest in this] world of diverse ornamentations.

[30] Just as in the case of a carpenter, we see his body, his instruments, and the craft which he produces, but the soul within him which is the maker is invisible, [so in the case of the Universal Soul] we see the sphere which stands for its body and the elements which stand for matter, but the Universal Soul itself is invisible to the eye. When the soul of the carpenter leaves his body, the body stops functioning; therefore we know that if the Universal Soul were to abandon its movement and instruments, no craft will be produced from them, but they will be scattered. And just as we know that when the body of the carpenter scatters after the soul has separated from it, there is a nullification of his craft, so we know that when the Universal Soul, which is the maker of this world, abandons its support for the world, then all the crafts of the world will be ruined. Thus, whatever is found in a constituent part [microcosm] of the world is also true of the whole [macrocosm] of the world. Since man is a part from among the parts of the world, when we observe that his body stands and functions because of his soul, so we know that the body of this world also stands and functions because of its Soul. And just as the soul of man, which is his maker, is not perceptible to our senses whereas his body and instruments are perceptible, so we come to know that whatever we see and find with our senses in this world are the body, instruments, and matter of [the Universal Soul], which is their maker, but [the Soul] itself is not perceptible to the senses.

[31] Thus, it is established that the maker of the world is the one who is not perceptible to the senses, and since whatever the senses cannot perceive is other than body, it is clear that the maker of this world is not a body. This is a clear proof for you to reflect upon and understand, so that you may be liberated.

5. *On the subtle and the dense*

[32] O brother! You asked about the state of the world: 'From what did the Universal Soul create the world? Since the Universal Soul is subtle, from where did it bring this density [of matter] in such abundance, and how did the dense originate from the subtle? When [the Soul] willed to create the world, what were the six entities which, as you described, are needed by every maker in order to produce his craft, since the world is crafted? Explain so that, God willing, we may know.'

[33] Know, O brother, that for the Universal Soul the spheres are like a body, the stars like instruments, and the four natures [elements] like matter to every maker. All the [six entities] which we mentioned are composite, crafted, and made by the

Universal Soul. But its making of the spheres and what they contain is not like the making of plants and animals; it is rather like the human soul making its body. [Just as] we see today that every maker produces the craft which he knows, so we realize that his body is also crafted and made by his soul. But the way the soul of a carpenter has made his body is not like the way he makes a throne or a chair. On the contrary, the substratum from which the soul of a carpenter made his body was a gift whose seed was in the Divine Word [which originated] from nothing.

[34] In the physical world, the gift received by the soul of the carpenter was that water which came from the loins of his father to the womb of his mother. From that substratum which it had received, [the soul] made a body for itself as a receptacle, in such a way that nobody knows [how] it was able to make this body without [the help of] an instrument perceptible to our senses. The instrument [that enabled] the human soul to make its body was that power from which the seven internal organs—that is the heart, liver, gall bladder, spleen, lung, kidney, and brain—were made in the womb. By that power, the human soul fashioned the seven internal organs from what was subtle in the food [consumed by the mother], and from that which was dense it made the bones, flesh, skin, and so on. [In this way, the soul] enfolded a body around itself and made its enclosure in the physical world, thus becoming able to make other bodies.

[35] Furthermore, just as the prime matter from which the [Universal] Soul made this world as its body was a gift from God, but [the knowledge of] how the Soul created the spheres from it is hidden and no intellect is able to know that, so today nobody knows how a particular soul can make the internal organs, such as bones, flesh, and skin, in the womb of the mother from the food which she eats. But everyone knows that [this is due to] that power which is innate in the human soul and that the essence of the soul cannot acquire this power which is a gift from God—may He be purified. And just as the human soul did not need instruments to create its body, the Universal Soul did not require instruments for the making of its body; rather it was able to make the spheres as its body from the power which was in its essence as prime matter and which it had received as a gift from God. Just as the instrument of the human soul in making its body was that [given] power within itself, the instrument of the Universal Soul in making the spheres was also that given power within itself. And just as the human soul had potentially the seven organs which we mentioned earlier and by which its body was made, the Universal Soul also, in the gift of prime [matter] from which its body came into existence, had those seven powers from which came the seven planets—namely Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury and the Moon—to make the world which is the body of the Universal Soul. And just as the human soul condensed and separated the subtlety (*laṭāfat*) from the food which the mother ate, made the seven internal organs from that which was purer and finer in it, and made bones, flesh, and skin from that which was dense, the Universal Soul also condensed the prime matter which it had received from God as a gift, made the

seven active planets from that which was subtle and luminous, and then from what remained made the spheres and the elements, corresponding to what we see in the world, which is weighed according to the balance of intellect.

[36] He who knows the [power of the] creation of the world, knows the power of his own creation, and he can fashion the form of his soul with the same balance according to which the form of his body has been fashioned. For as God says, 'Verily, you have known the first creation, then why do you not reflect?' (56:62). According to this verse, he who does not comprehend the creation and recognize [its true nature] transgresses God's command, and he who transgresses God's command, his place is in the fire.

[37] Now, let us come to our main point which is this: just as the body and instrument of the Universal Soul, with respect to [our] recognition of plants and animals, are visible but incomprehensible [to us], so the instrument from which it made the spheres and stars is comprehensible but invisible. This is because the more the cause of the world [the Universal Soul] comes close to its origin; that is the First Cause [the Universal Intellect], the farther it recedes from finding and knowing it. [When it is not possible for the Universal Soul to reach the First Cause, how can it be possible for man] to reach it, which is his [first] cause [too]? Moreover, whatever man discovers is due to it [the Intellect], but he is unable to comprehend it, because that First Cause is the universal [macrocosm] of which man is a part [microcosm]. But anything other than man is a mere trace of it, and no trace can ever discern the whole, just as a writer's script which is a trace of him cannot recognize him. This knot has now been untied. Attain so that you may know! Recognize so that you may achieve salvation!

Ontology

6. On different kinds of existents

[38] O brother! You asked, 'What [is meant by] the term "existent" (*hast*), how many kinds of existents are there, what is each one called, and how can it be recognized? In the *tawḥīd* [profession of One God], should God be called existent or not, for if we do not call Him existent, then He becomes non-existent (*nīst*), which is *ta'ṭīl* [negation of God's existence]? Explain this so that we may know'.

[39] Know O brother that the existent is of two kinds: one is called necessary (*wājib*) and the other contingent (*mumkin*). The necessary existent is higher than the contingent existent [because] without the necessary existent the contingent cannot exist. For instance, the necessary existent is like a bird and the contingent existent like its egg; it is not possible for the egg to reach the state of a bird without the help of the bird from which it has come into existence and whose position is like that of the necessary existent.

[40] We say that the world in its entirety is the contingent existent, not the necessary existent, because all its parts are contingent existents. The contingent existent is that which is intermediate between the existent and the non-existent. For instance fire, which is one of the constituent parts of the world, is a contingent existent because its heat may be transformed into cold and its dryness into moisture, thus turning fire into water. The cooling of heat and the drying of moisture in this world testify to the correctness of this state. Therefore, fire is water in contingency, and similarly all components of the world are in [a state of] contingency. Likewise, plants and animals are contingent and not necessary, because the plants and animals which exist today may or may not exist tomorrow. All such things are called contingent existents, including the two entities of plant and animal, each of which is a part of a part of the world.

[41] According to this explanation, the entire world is a contingent existent which cannot exist without the necessary existent. Inevitably, the creator of the world [that is, the Universal Intellect] has to be a necessary existent, because if we say that it is a contingent existent, then it should also have a necessary existent. Then let us stop at this point [and say] that the originator of the world is a necessary existent whereas the world itself is a contingent existent, just as a palm-date is like a contingent existent because from it the palm-tree may or may not come into existence. Since, as we mentioned, the existent is of two kinds and both of them are species, and whatsoever is a species must have a genus, it is inevitable for the genus to be superior to both species; the necessary and the contingent, in rank and not in time or anything else. That is the Command of God—may His Name be mighty—which is the Absolute Existent (*ḥast-i muṭlaq*), the existent which has come into existence from non-existence. Under it there are the necessary existent, which is the [Universal] Intellect, and the contingent existent, that is, the [Universal] Soul which is under the Intellect. The Soul has the potential, through effort, to become one day like its source (*aşl*), just as it is possible for a date-stone to grow one day into a palm-tree. But it is not befitting for God to be a genus, because the status of genus is given only to that which has species under it. The genus then is like the cause and the species like its effect. It is not befitting for God to be either the cause or the effect, and it is therefore not appropriate to say that God is an existent. It should be known that the Absolute Existent [the Command of God] is originated by Him, and His ipseity transcends existence [and] its opposite which is nonexistence.

[42] It should be known further that whatever has one rank is superior and prior to that which consists of many ranks. The necessary existent has one rank. The contingent existent, which is intermediate between existence and non-existence, has three ranks: the spatial existent, the temporal existent, and the relative existent. The spatial existent [is exemplified in the statement] ‘there are dates in Kirmān’ or ‘there are stars in the sky’; the temporal existent [in] ‘there is light in the day’;

and the relative existent [in] ‘man has speech’ or ‘a cow has hooves.’ All these ranks are included in the contingent existence. [Since] the contingent existent has ranks whereas the necessary existent does not, we come to know that the contingent existent is lower in rank than the necessary existent and is dependent on it for existence. The necessary existent is one, just as the genus of animal, which is like the necessary existent, is one, whereas bird and rational animal [mankind], which are species under it, are contingent existents. The existence of bird, reptile, and man depends on the existence of the [genus] animal; if you remove the animal; all these species would [also] be removed. Thus, if in imagination you remove the necessary existent, the contingent existents would also be removed. Attain so that you may know! Recognize so that you may be liberated!

7. On the meanings of ‘no-thing’ and ‘is not’

[43] O brother! You asked: ‘How should we understand [the word] “no-thing” (*nah-chīz*) and how should we recognize “is not” (*nīst*)? Is there any difference between “no-thing” and “is not”, or do they have the same meaning as “thing” (*chīz*) and “is” (*hast*)? Explain so that we may know.’

[44] Know, O brother, that a group of people claim that ‘no-thing’ and ‘is not’ are only two names, otherwise they are one [in meaning]; similarly they say that ‘thing’ and ‘is’ both have the same meaning. If you have understood [this, know] that the word (*nām*) ‘thing’ is not applicable except to the meaning (*dhāt*) which is attainable (*yāftanī*), and the word ‘is’ is applicable only to a thing with respect to the present time in which it is found, not with respect to the past nor with respect to the future. [This is] because time is of three modes: the past which has elapsed, the future which is going to come such as tomorrow or the next year, and the present such as today or this year. The word ‘is’ is applicable to a thing only with respect to the present time, not with respect to the past or the future. Thus, we should not say ‘yesterday is hot’ or ‘tomorrow is cold;’ rather we should say ‘today is hot’ or ‘this year is cold.’ It would be absurd to say that ‘is’ and ‘thing’ are both one and have the same meaning, or to say that ‘no-thing’ and ‘is not’ have the same meaning. If it were possible to say so, then [in the case of ‘no-thing’ and ‘is not’] we would have said ‘so and so *no-thing*’ means a thing in the sense of ‘so and so *does not* have a thing’, or we would say ‘*is not* belongs to so and so’ in the sense of ‘*no-thing* belongs to so and so;’ [likewise], if ‘is’ and ‘thing’ were both one and the same thing, it would have been permissible for us to say ‘so and so does not have an *is*’ [in the sense of] ‘so and so does not have a *thing*’.

[45] As for the word ‘no-thing’, it should be known that it means to nullify a thing by applying the prefix ‘no’ (*nah*) to a thing which has an attainable meaning; otherwise if ‘no-thing’ necessarily had a meaning which could be applied to it or to which it was possible to indicate, then it would itself have been a thing. Logically,

when the word 'no' is prefixed to anything, that thing should have a meaning; but this is impossible because when you prefix the word 'no' or 'non' to one of the things or names, [you are negating] that particular thing or name to which you have applied the prefix and not any other thing apart from it. For instance, if someone says 'no-wall', this utterance is not applicable to anything; or if he says 'no-cow' or 'no-man', here a meaning does not become necessary; However, when the word 'no' or 'non' is prefixed to a name or a thing that comes alternately after another thing and between which there is no intermediary [state]—such as day and night, blind and seeing, odd and even—then the name of that [second] which follows [the first] becomes established. Thus, if you say 'no-night', this amounts to saying 'day', or if you say 'non-hearing', this amounts to saying 'deaf,' or if you say 'non-blind', this amounts to saying 'seeing'. But if the word 'no' or 'non' is prefixed to the word 'is', then inevitably it is applied either to the past or to the future, and you would have said that something has been or will be. [The expression] 'has been' signifies the past and 'will be' the future; the former is a sign of the past and the latter of the future. [For instance], when you say 'there is no night', it refers to something which has been in the past or will be in the future, but does not exist at the [present] time which is intermediate between these two times; it is a sign of a thing which has been in the past or will be [in the future].

[46] Thus, we have established that [the meaning of] *nīst* ('is not') is not free from being either time which has passed or time which has not come, but it is not time in the present. For instance, in summer you may say, 'it is not spring, it is *Tir-māh*', in which one [the spring] is past and the other [the first month of summer] is present; but you cannot say [at the same time] 'it is not summer', because it is the present time and 'is not' does not apply to the present. Thus, it has been explained that the meaning of 'no-thing' is not equal to that of 'is not' because the word 'no-thing' is not applicable to all the three [tenses]—that is, you cannot say that 'no-thing is not', or 'no-thing has not been' or 'no-thing will not be', [whereas 'is not' is applicable to both the past and the future]. Attain so that you may know! Recognize so that you may be liberated!

8. *On the nature of the human soul*

[47] O brother! You asked about the doctrine of a group who say that the human soul is nothing but the equilibrium of elements (*i'tidāl-i ṭabāyi*), and that when the elements come together appropriately, they reach a point where movement and knowledge are generated. [The group] supports this doctrine by the argument that when the body loses its equilibrium, the soul ceases to exist. Thus, the soul is nothing but the equilibrium of elements, and when they return to their origins, the soul ceases to exist. If this is so, then you have neither reward nor punishment [for the soul in the hereafter]. You wanted a categorical answer to be given in this con-

nection, so that you may refute this doctrine and have a firm belief in the survival of the soul, and so that observance of the Holy Prophet's law (*sharī'at*) becomes pleasant. You will learn that the soul is not the equilibrium of elements such that when they return to their origins it ceases to survive; rather the soul is something other than the equilibrium of the elements. Peace!

[48] Know, O brother, that had there not been 'how' and 'why', then all people would have been wise, and had there not been someone to answer the questioner, then truth would not have been distinguishable from falsehood. Thus, by divine help, we say in response to that group who say that the soul is nothing but the equilibrium [of elements], that this equilibrium which they claim to be the soul is not free from being either substance or accident. If the soul is a substance [in] equilibrium, then it is [different from] the origins from which it comes into existence, [in which case] it would be the fifth element, not [a mixture of] the four elements. Then let them show us that fifth one which comes forth from these four elements but is not from them, the one which is harmonious whereas these four are [discordant], so that we may see it as we see these four. But they are not able to find that harmonious one which they claim to have come forth from the four elements which are different and not in equilibrium. They are unable to do so because it is absurd for someone to say that a body can produce another body by itself. Thus, it is evident that what they claim [to be the soul] is not a substance. Had it been a substance [composed of the elements] it would have been visible and accessible like they are visible and accessible [to our senses].

[49] Then, inevitably, the equilibrium which they claim to be the soul will be called by them an accident (*'arad*). If they say that it is an accident, then they cannot say that it has action, because an accident is that which cannot subsist on its own, and action does not come into being from that which is not self-subsistent. Moreover, since the accident itself is an action [of an agent], it is not possible for that action to produce another action [on its own], just as it is not possible for a body to produce another body or to be originated by itself. And since that which is called equilibrium has no action, then those actions which we find from the soul—such as comprehension of things, discrimination of one thing from another, and so on—these do not belong to the equilibrium which they claim to be the soul. It is evident therefore, that since equilibrium does not have action; their claim that it is the soul is false.

[50] Another answer we give to the one who says that the soul is the equilibrium of elements is that whereas the elements are hot, cold, wet, and dry, equilibrium is neither hot nor cold, neither wet nor dry. Had it been possible to originate from hot, cold, wet, and dry, something which is neither hot nor cold, neither wet nor dry, then it would also have been possible for fire to produce cold and for snow [to generate] heat. But this is absurd and impossible, [just as] it is equally absurd and impossible to say that something harmonious originates from

different elements and which contains within itself nothing of them. If it were possible for the harmonious to originate from opposite elements, then it would also have been possible for something opposite to emerge from the harmonious. Then there would not be any difference between the one who says that these four opposites originate a harmonious thing [which they call the soul], and the one who says that it [the soul] consists of equilibrium and harmony, whose essence is the same without differentiation, and which originates death as well as life, blindness as well as sight, health as well as illness. This argument is absurd and no intelligent person would accept it. And if, according to their claim, one says that the soul is the equilibrium of elements, then opposite actions should not come forth from it because, as we have already explained, the opposite does not come from the harmonious. [But] the soul is that from which comes generosity and parsimony, bravery and cowardice, piety and impiety, which makes it clear that it is not the equilibrium of the elements. Similarly, when two white bodies come together, it is not possible to originate something other than white, just as when two black bodies come together, there comes forth nothing but a black thing. [Hence], it is impossible and absurd to originate something harmonious from opposite things when they come together; and since the elements are opposite to one another, it is not possible that from their gathering there should originate something harmonious without any differentiation in it.

[51] Thus, we have established that the soul is not the equilibrium [of elements]. It is a substance which brings opposite elements into harmony and puts them together by the power with which God has endowed it. And great is the wisdom which appears to the soul in its resurrection after [leaving] the body. As God says in the following verse after a detailed description of creation one after the other, 'And certainly We created man from a quintessence of clay, then We placed him as [a drop of] sperm in an unshakeable place, then We made the sperm a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We made him another creation. So blessed is God, the best of Creators' (23:12–14). Then He has said, 'After that you will most surely die. Then surely on the Day of Resurrection you shall be raised' (23:15–16). If this were not the purpose of creation, then no wisdom would have appeared in this world. But the soul, which brings together these opposite [elements] in the body, leaves them again. If it separates from them with the recognition of the Creator and in obedience and worship, then it will remain in the eternal world in delight, but if it does not acquire knowledge and departs in ignorance and disobedience, then it will remain in hell. Attain so that you may know! Recognize so that you may be liberated!

9. *On the soul's existence and self-subsistence*

[52] O brother! You asked about the soul, 'Does it exist or not, and is it self-subsistent or does its subsistence depend on the body? Is it from among substances or from accidents? What is the proof that the soul is a substance and self-subsistent when we do not find it without a body, and without body no action should come forth from it? Demonstrate [the proof] that we may know'.

[53] Know, O brother, that our bodies are alive because of the soul, and the proof of the soundness of this statement is that our bodies are moveable and that whatever is moveable, its movement is [caused] either from outside or from inside. An entity whose movement is [caused] from outside is moved [either] by another entity, as wind moves a tree or water moves a water-wheel and a boat, or another entity pulls it towards itself, as an ox pulls a windlass and a magnet pulls iron. [However], our bodies move [voluntarily] without being pulled or repulsed by something else. Since the movement of our bodies is not [caused] from outside, it must of necessity be from inside. The movement of an entity which comes from inside is either natural [physical] or spiritual. [The entity with] natural movement is that which never rests and does not alter from one state into another. As for our bodies, sometimes they move and sometimes they rest as long as the soul is with them, but they become [inactive] when the soul parts from them. Thus, it is evident that the movement of our bodies is not due to a physical [cause]; had it been physical, they would not become [motionless] by the separation of the soul from them. The movement of our bodies is caused by the soul.

[54] From this explanation it becomes clear that it is the soul which keeps our bodies alive and that the souls of our bodies subsist by themselves. The soul is a substance and self-subsistent, the mover and keeper alive of the body. The body is not a substance, nor self-subsistent, nor is it the mover of a substance, since the mover by necessity is [another] substance. The soul which moves the body is a substance [because] the definition of a substance is that it admits opposite things, and yet [its essence always] remains the same; its state does not change from one to another by admitting them. Thus, the human soul admits opposite things, such as speaking and hearing, movement and rest, bravery and cowardice, and so on.

[55] As for the statement that the action of the soul does not come into existence without a body, the answer is that the action of the soul is to know, and in order to know it does not need a body. But when the soul wants to portray [the form of] that knowledge on a [material] body, it seeks the help of the [human] body which is linked to it, and it is able to do this because of compatibility [between the two bodies]. Ask so that you may know! Comprehend so that you may be liberated!

10. *On the definition of substance*

[56] O brother! You asked, 'What is substance (*jawhar*), how many kinds of it are there, and what is each one called? Are we permitted to call God substance or not?'

[57] Know, O brother, that substance is called genus of genera or *summum genus* [that is, the supreme genus], under which comes everything because all existents are under and within it. Substance has two species: one is called simple (*basīf*), that is dispersed, and the other compound (*murakkab*), which is mixed. [So] when you are asked what substance is, say that it is that whose essence is one, which brings together opposite things without changing its own state. When you are asked how many kinds of substance there are, say that there are two kinds; one is simple and the other compound. If you are asked which one is simple, say that it is the soul; and if you are asked which one is the compound, say it is this entire world and all things within it. If you are asked what opposite things the soul has brought together without changing its own state, say knowledge and ignorance, goodness and badness, well-being and mischief. And if you are asked what opposite things has the world brought together, say that it has brought together the six directions of which each one is opposite to another—that is, above and below, left and right, front and back—all three [pairs] being opposite to one another, like earth, water, air, and fire, or like light and darkness, which are [also] opposite to each other.

[58] This is the definition of a simple substance and a compound substance, so that you may know that, according to our explanation of the definition, it is not permissible to call and know God as substance. When substance has this definition, then it is defined, and that which is defined is incapable of coming out of its definition. A definition necessitates a definer who has enclosed a substance within the domain [of that definition]. So that the wise may know, [we say]: that which is [confined] in a definition or a boundary does not deserve to be [called] God. He who keeps it in its defined boundary is God who is free from substance and accident, and all things are contained within the enclosure of His creation. As God says, 'He created everything and measured it as ought to be measured' (25:2). This is the measure of substance. Study so that you may know! Recognize so that you may be liberated!

11. *On the soul's relation with the body*

[59] O brother! You asked, 'How and where in the body is the human soul? Previously you have established that the movement of the human body is [caused by the soul] from within. Explain how [the soul] is inside [the body]? Is it like someone who is in a house, and if that is the case how is it that when its ways are closed, the soul can leave the body all at once?' Peace!

[60] Know, O brother, that one entity can be within another entity in twelve different ways: first, it is as a part in the whole, such as a hand or a foot in the human

body; the second is as the whole in the part, as is the human body in its organs, which is the totality of the organs; the third is as water in a pitcher; the fourth is as an accident in a substance, such as the whiteness of hair in old age; the fifth is as one thing mixed with another, such as vinegar and honey which is called oxymel; the sixth is as a captain in a ship; the seventh is like a king in a country; the eighth is like a genus in a species such as animal in man, that is to say, man is a species of animal and animal is included in man; the ninth is like a species in a genus, as man is in animal; the tenth is as form in matter, as is the form of a signet ring [set] in silver; the eleventh is as matter in form, as is silver in the form of a signet ring; and the twelfth is as an entity in time.

[61] It is inevitable, therefore, that the soul in the body must be like one of these [twelve] ways which have been mentioned. We say that the soul in the body is not like a part in the whole, as is a hand in the human body, because the hand is of the body but the soul is not of the body. Also, the soul in the body is not like the whole in its parts, because the whole of the organs is the body, that is, the body is nothing but the organs, but the soul itself is not the body, rather it is a different substance. Also, the soul in the body is not like water in a pitcher or jar, [because] the jar or pitcher is a place for water, but the soul does not need a place [in which to locate itself]. Also, the soul in the body is not like a captain in a ship, in that the captain is in one place and the rest [of the ship] is devoid of him, but in the human body there is no place devoid of the soul; if a place were to be devoid of it, that place would not be alive and moveable. Also, the soul in the body is not like an accident in a substance, because the soul itself is a substance and not an accident; and when an accident leaves a substance, the substance remains in its state, but the body does not remain in its state when the soul leaves it. Also the soul in the body is not like vinegar and honey in oxymel, because vinegar and honey have both changed from their states; wherever such a thing is mixed its state changes, as when you mix vinegar and water neither remains in its previous state, but the soul and the body remains in their state despite being mingled. Also, the soul in the body is not like a species in a genus as man is in animal, in that both are alike in eating and reproduction, but the soul leaves the body and is [therefore] not its species. Also, the soul in the body is not like a genus in a species as animal is in man, since genus and species are linked together in many aspects except in their form which is different, but the soul has no connection with the body as a genus because the soul is subtle and the body is dense. Also, the soul in the body is not like an entity in time, because time is prior to an entity which is in time and comes into being in time, but the body has not been and is not prior to the soul.

[62] We say, therefore, that the soul in the body is like a subtle form in dense matter, as is the form of a signet ring in silver, because the soul is subtle like the form and matter is dense like the body, and the soul is not the body. Ask so that you may know! Learn so that you may be liberated!

PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY

Dīwān

Reprinted from Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Forty Poems from the Dīwān*, tr. Peter Lamborn Wilson and Gholam Reza A'wānī (Tehran, 1977), pp. 31–43.

The First Poem

God in his unity
 most ancient of all.
 No multiplicity.
 Alone of everything
 uncreated.
 What say you 'why did He
 make the universe
 out of pearl?
 Neither matter nor form
 height nor breadth.
 You agree: in every case
 cause precedes effect
 as one is prior to numbers
 or part to the whole
 and since heaven and earth (all agree)
 are both effects
 why consider heaven alone
 a realm of knowledge and power
 (like its own antecedent cause)?
 Whatever He brings today
 from potency into Act
 could just as well be
 yesterday or tomorrow
 since He is not in need
 nor impotent. You claim
 that between cause and effect
 between nothingness and creation
 some interval of time must intervene
 but TIME itself is born
 of the rolling spheres.
 How can time exist?
 a non-existent entity?

a beginningless void?
 before the spheres themselves?
 If you think of nothingness
 subsisting in itself
 then Unity must have an opposite
 a partner in manifestation.
 If 'nothingness'
 is merely a name or sound
 would this not prove that even names
 are not without their due effects?
 God is above all
 as ONE above the numbers:
 only thus is TIME's existence known
 that of PLACE refuted
 genesis necessitated
 and Eternity proven.
 Do not if you are wise
 attribute to HIM
 any action but *creatio ex nihilo*
 of a single being in the wink
 of an eye
 or less.
 Do not speak of His Action
 in such a way that His Essence
 might be passive like our own
 moulded in time by act
 by the least of intentions.
 ABSOLUTE UNITY:
 seek nothing outside His Essence
 for He is All-comprehensive
 while the essences of things
 are particular, determined.
 If you claim He transcends all vision
 do not attribute qualities to Him
 for this would make Him
 dual in essence
 no longer singular, unique and one.
 True, you see in this universe
 a myriad of things made of earth,
 wind, water, fire, metals and seas.
 If you could float down

like Hārūt the fallen angel
 from celestial spheres
 then could you not
 lift yourself up again
 like the Morning Star?

EMANATION FROM ESSENCE NOT FROM BEING:
 the cause or the creation of one thing
 must be ONE.

The first emanation is Intellect
 then Soul, then Body,
 plants, the abundance of beasts,
 the rational animal.

Each archetype contingent in itself
 but (in reality) an impossible being;
 each one manifest in itself but
 (in reality) a hidden non-existent.

What say you now? how this painted screen
 is set up in the vastly air
 like an enamelled pavilion pitched
 in a desert of fire?

Does it move by itself or
 has someone set it spinning?
 keeps it revolving like *this*
 around the zenith on high?
 How do you define 'movement'?

Locomotion? Turning from one state
 to another lowly or sublime?

Then explain to me please
 its condition and locus
 if you know. If you don't know
 stay off the path of Wisdom
 till your blindfold is untied.

When by way of demonstration
 and deduction you speak
 of NINE SPHERES—

what say you again?
 what lies beyond these verdant fields?

If you answer 'VACUUM'
 I say you're wrong—impossible
 that solid forms should hang
 in a void. If you say

‘PLENUM’—no, no—one cannot conceive
 a physical body without limit or end
 like a sublime substance.
 Then what keeps this ball of dust
 suspended—*so*—between water and fire
 thunderbolt and raging tempest?
 If the elements are opposites in nature
 why do the four of them
 seem to embrace in an excess of unity
 in a single place like
 loving brothers? or if you say
 they’re not opposites ‘in essence’
 why have they been given NAMES
 which express their opposition?
 BEGIN NOW
 KNOW YOURSELF and turn
 your steed away from the
 whirling spheres
 and this dust stained toy.
 How can you taste Divine Mysteries
 with the devil in you
 slashing about with his sword
 duelling the inner Adam?
 Your vision of the
 spiritual essences of things
 reminds me of a blind man
 dropped in the middle of the
 soul-nourishing garden of the Spirit
 trying with his sightless eyes
 to visualize the shapes and colours
 of its delights.

Speech

you whirligig windowless jasper dome
 with the hump of an old wife, power of youth
 we your brood and you the unloving mother
 you our mother! and yet so vengeful.
 Black silent clay, this body’s your baby
 (not pure Intelligence nor rational Substance)
 the body—abode of noble sublimities

and you the mother, mother of the house ...
 When I finish my work in this house today
 I shall be off alone and tomorrow the house is yours.

MY SON this corpse of yours, this prison
 will never be lovely even draped in silk brocades;
 embellish your soul with the jewel of speech
 for the soul is ugly even in silk brocades.
 can you not see God's chains on your ankles
 (only awakened souls can see them)?
 Be a man in your chains and cinch your belt
 nor dream your cell the realm of Darius:
 those who act in moderation find
 kingdoms wider far than his.
 Patience! no one finds heart's desire
 but a man of patience;
 and for sexual lust open the Qur'ān
 to the story of Adam and Eve.
 Stay out of harm's way and do no hurt
 but justly, eye for eye;
 stick to no petty grudge like the brambles
 nor like the date palm bend in humiliation
 for dung is thrown in the pit because it stinks
 sweet incense *burned* for its refreshing fragrance.
 Don't run around with everyone nor shut yourself up alone—
 walk wisdom's way—be neither fly nor gryphon:
 if there's no one around worth talking to
 then 100 times better alone than with idiots
 (the sun's alone—who blames it
 or calls it less than the seven PLEIADES?)
 Don't screw up your face at *more or less*;
 do with what's given and be equitable with all.
 The states of this vagabond world are fleeting
 cold after heat, joy after sorrow—
 better not to have grabbed for ephemeralities.
 Listen—GOOD ADVICE—don't be a bilious fool.
 Who cares if the earth is littered with pebbles or gold:
 you'll lie in your grave beneath a shack or a palace
 (remember the man who built a castle in SANAA
 now fallen to ruins in a ruined city).
 The world's a cunning devil whom the wise

have never cultivated for companionship;
 if you've an ounce of sense don't swagger
 in its sulphurous wake like a drunken clot.
 The world's a bottomless mud choked well—
 don't lose your purified soul in its cloudy depths
 (your soul purified by *SPEECH*—as the wise
 through Logos have flown from well's-bottom to the stars).
 Take pride in speech as the Prophet (who willed
 not even a camel to his heirs) treasured his eloquence;
 come to life in speech as Jesus
 raised the dead with a word;
 make yourself known through speech
 for no one is known if not by what he says ...
 but if you've no ideas sew up your trap
 for a word unspoken is better than an asinine remark.
 Carve your utterance straight as quarrel's shaft
 then *shoot*—don't fumble the bow.
 Pay more attention to words than good looks
 for man is sublimed through speech not stature
 (the almond gives better fruit than willows
 or poplars which are taller;
 a sober man may look like a tramp
 but his words will brand him no drunk).
 The ocean of LOGOS are the lovely words of God
 sparkling with gemstones, glowing with pearls.
 The outward form of revelation: bitter as a gulp
 of seawater—sweet pearls its innards to the wise.
 If sunken treasure lies in ocean deeps
 look for a diver—why run vainly down the strand?
 Why has the Creator sunk these chests
 of gems in briny weeded troughs?
 Tell me for the Prophet's sake! who told Him
 to entrust the hermeneutic to the wise, words to the rabble?
 The diver surfaces with a handful of slime
 perhaps because he sees in you an enemy ...
 look for the pith of revelation, don't follow the herd
 content with husks like asses with their braying.
 On the Night of Power the mosques are bright as day
 with your candles—but your heart is pitchy as 12 o'clock;
 don't waste wax—for tapers cannot banish
 darkness from an ignorant heart.

You have not learned piety but from sheer pride
 you solve riddles at midnight in an ebon well ...
 if you're not a *snake* why do the believers
 tremble in your hands and the Christians fear you?
 Cease this rambling and giggling at the fortunes of life
 for nothing on this dusty globe belongs to you.
 How often have the spinning spheres distracted the wise
 and thrown their perfect peace in turbulence?
 Darius left behind his slaves, his concubines
 his cattle and gold and departed with a decaying bag of skin.
 Earth is a vulture, no creature safe
 from its beak, neither lord nor butler.
 A day comes in which is no shelter nor refuge
 from the arbitration of a just and equitable Judge;
 at that hour all shall be paid for their deeds
 both the just and the unjust receive justice;
 on that day of tumult in that turbulent crowd
 before the martyrs of God I shall take refuge with
 the DAUGHTER OF MUḤAMMAD

so that God the Almighty may decide
 between me and the enemies
 of the household of the Prophet.

The Angelic Presence

You, whose name has not been formed by anyone,
 whose proof not even intellect can grasp,
 to label you would be a loathsome act
 for you are far removed from genus and species:
 neither a 'subject' nor an 'attribute',
 neither a substance nor an accident.
 The moralist can't order you about
 nor any censor tell you what to say.
 The dance of the Sun's disc through the skies
 is your command and gives birth to the shades
 of animals; you stir the painter's pot,
 the whirling spheres, mixing and mingling all
 your most heart-catching colours in the stars.
 The very mention of your name in the nest
 of glory cuts off the wing of Gabriel;
 on the Throne of Sanctity your lowliness
 unveils the jewels which grace the bride of heaven.
 Creation testifies that you were here before it,

and pre-eternity swears to your permanence.
O luminous sun, veiled by your shadow of light,
goal of all lovers, beyond their petty loves,
the paradoxical treasure of Qārūn
(which is never where you find it) symbolises
your single pearl, concealed within two jewels—
two jewels which created the world, two gems
which chastised Adam.

The Universe is like
a rolling sea, our planet a tiny skiff
and nature the anchor; its waves are trees, the stones
which wash up on the beach are animals;
but one, the pearl, the crimson carnelian
is you —the lonely beast endowed with speech.
And who is the diver? the Active Intellect
(worthy to be the mind of the Prophet himself).
What is the End? the same as was the beginning.
What is the goal? to seek that which is best.
Behold the Good, if you have eyes, listen
to Truth, if you have ears to hear it with.
Lust's falcon has snatched you up in its beak, a dove
from Time's snare—have you forgotten, my brother,
Adam our father's sin and repentant tears?
I give you a gift wrapped in veils of allusion
hoping you can slice away its seals
with meditation's sword: Adam ate
no bread in Eden; man was not the eater
of grain till his feet crossed the threshold of earth.
All this had happened to Adam when Satan's dam
had not yet come to birth.

What do you say
of Satan's refusal to worship man? was he forced
not to bow, or did he have free choice to refuse?
If the power was his, to prostrate or not, then God
was impotent; but if God had pre-ordained
him to refusal, then God must be unjust.
No, give up thinking of work which is not your work
and cease to tread a path which is not your way.
No longer seek in vain the water of life
in the midst of your own darkness, like some lost
and bootless Alexander; for there where Khidhr

found the fountain, the demon is no more
companion of the angel of our soul.

Free Will and Determination

Who forced you to go in for all this
eating and running around and sleeping and waking up
and what's the good of it? If this fate
didn't tickle your palate, why
have you spent your life guzzling and snoring?
How have you become such a disaster to yourself?
Tell the truth (wise men always tell the truth):
If you yourself destined yourself to such a fate
then you must be your own Maker!
but this is manifestly bad doctrine. No,
the truth is that God's chains are upon you
and this abode is your pasturing place.
But munching grass and chewing cud
—damn!—this is work for cows!
How then do you explain your curious love
for the pasture? Ah, gourmet of hay,
all your fear and sorrow is the fear
of *decrease*—which cannot be avoided.
How in this hurly-burly world do you expect
to find permanence? Becoming and Change
to the wise are signs of annihilation.
Your state changes, the stars shift about
day gives way to night—are these
not witnesses of the world's impermanence?
My dear tourist; this earth is like
a room in a one night hotel, your journey
towards the abode of eternity.
Do not regret your passing from this place—
even if the house is torn down
religion prospers. Do not debase yourself
for finally some day however late at last
you must depart this caravanserai.
Make your provision for the road
obedience to God, devotion
the coin you spend on this difficult journey.
Gird yourself in armour of godliness and wisdom

for there lurks along the path a hideous dragon.
When you reach the fork, choose the best way
for one street leads to felicity, the other to Hell.
When the Prophet himself has come to you
with promises and threats, how can you claim
that Good and Evil are written, kismet, Fate?
Why try to shift the burden of sin and sloth
onto the shoulders of Destiny? nonsense!
If God destined you to sin
then—according to you—the sin is God's
the evil-doer is God (hideous belief!)
even if you don't dare to draw
the logical conclusion, in fear of getting
knocked on the head. Yes, that's your doctrine
even if your tongue proclaims Him Judge
and Wisest of Wise. God knows
your tongue and heart do not agree—but you
lie bald-faced to the Lord of the Universe.
The wise man treads midway
between Fate and Freewill
the path of the learned threads between hope and fear.
Seek you the Straight Way likewise
for either extreme leads to pain and suffering.
Straight indeed is that way in religion
approved by Intellect, the gift of God to Man.
Justice is the cornerstone of the cosmos
—and consider!—by what faculty is justice
distinguished from tyranny except by Reason?
If man follows the tracks of Reason
it would not be wrong to expect to see
pearls spring up in his footprints from the soil.
Reason—Wisdom—only for this
and its radiant dignity does the Lord
of the Universe applaud and deign to address
his creature Man. Wisdom is the prop
for every weakness, relief from every sorrow
comfort in every fear, balm for each ill
noble companion, bulwark in the way of the world
and in religion a trusty guide, a stout staff.
Even if the whole Universe were free
it would be in bondage—but the wise man

even in chains would be at liberty.
 The Sage! Study him well with an awakened eye
 and see by contrast with what black plague
 this ignorant world is afflicted.
 This one tells you 'All actions are performed
 by God—the servant's duty is silence
 submission and contentment'. That one replies
 'All good is from God, all evil, O World
 your work alone'. But both parties
 agree on one thing at least, that a Great Day
 is coming, a day of reward and punishment.
 But if the work is not mine, how
 shall I be rewarded? Look: illogic!!!
 Where's the justice in chastising the innocent?
 You may see it but I am nonplussed. No,
 this arbitrator of *your* judgment day
 is the Drunkard of Sodom, not the Wise Being
 who has built the vault of Heaven.
 True wisdom would never lead us astray
 in such error—then follow Wisdom's manifest Way.
 Know the God of the Universe and be grateful—
 these two precepts are worth more to you
 than all the powers of Solomon.
 Learn to be wise. Do not prattle
 but speak in measure. Know that on the Last Day
 these things have value, these are priceless.
 The True Man is robed in faith and virtue
 —even fine silks cannot disguise
 the art-less and wicked. Endeavour
 to become a man by SPEECH—know
 that save for such a man all creatures
 are but weeds and thorns. GOOD SPEECH
 is to man's heart as air and water
 to his body—a source of life.
 Listen then O noble heart to the PROOF
 for to the truly noble, his words are nobility.

Being and Becoming

Whatever EXISTS, shall be worn away and die;
 that which is to be, then—whence does it spring?

HE has not come into being, but is eternal;
 that which BECOMES cannot be everlasting.
 What is never born does not increase, and that
 which does not increase, how can it die?
 The world forever wears away and disappears
 for if it did not die it could not grow.
 No one can undo the knot tied by God's hand.
 Four wives and seven husbands procreate
 without cease and all things of the world but God
 are like these women. Decrepit filthy earth,
 how does it manage to seize and enchant our hearts?
 What do you think, my sage? When does the wheel
 of this watermill ever cease to turn? Tell me how
 that which is not can ever be, or that which is
 can cease to be? Don't waste your time in chat
 (fashionable as it may be with So-and-So);
 how did you develop a taste for food
 that gives you indigestion? Rather ask:
 if the world goes on forever, what can it do
 for you? or if it dies, what can *you* do?
 He who wants to know more of what I teach
 ought first to purify his soul, for honey
 cannot stick to a hand that's purified.
 Wisdom asks no one but the wise
 to busy himself with such matters.
 Furs and silks are still lovely even on a hag
 but they cannot improve an ugly woman's face.
 He who cleanses his soul of error and sin
 in the fire of intellect, deserves to dole out
 Measure by measure the contents of my sack,
 but if you lack the wherewithal, refrain
 from spattering heaven's cupola with mire.
 He whom love of the world has inflamed will never
 be able to comprehend the truths I speak;
 O confidence-man, O trickster, what can you gain
 from poetry such as mine? You cannot trust
 yourself—how then shall anyone trust you?
 Prepare your heart, as I instruct and hope,
 for the work at hand, so that this axe of mine
 can trim the branches from your ignorance-tree
 (but mildly and without pain); and turn your face

from those who deal in superstitious slander.
 Good counsel scratches out the eye of ignorance
 as sure as a fool in public will lose his pants!

Planets, Metals, Etc.

Reveille! Time to get up! from the couch of sloth! my son!
 and gaze upon the globe with the orb of sages!
 Eating and sleeping is the work of a creature with whom
 you my ignoramus cannot hope to compare: the ass.
 Why do you suppose God gave you a brain?
 for eating and snoring contests with donkeys?
 Tie round your fat head the turban of Wisdom
 then one night raise your eyes to the lapis lazuli vault
 of heaven like an emerald sea's surging waves
 which cast bright pearls from stygian trenches:
 dark night crawling with stars like the armour
 of Alexander's legions glinting through tenebrous shades.
 See the Pleiades like seven sisters sitting side by side
 Venus pale faced as a terrified girl and Mars
 with the baleful eye of a he-lion. Ponder:
 Did the Dog-star grow silvery grey or Capella
 begin to glow like a scarlet carnelian by themselves?
 Each night the spheres spin their cerulean twine
 about the throats of thousands upon thousands
 of blossoming narcissus and lay their distant fires
 around the harvest of the water lilies. But—
 if these lights are really fires, how has this harvest
 never been seen to increase or diminish?
 Without oil, wick or wood fire never gives
 light and radiance. If fire is that which needs fuel
 that which needs no fuel cannot be fire.
 The Sun is the *maker* of fire; distinguish, my boy,
 between the maker and the fire itself.
 Or if that which you see is an army, who
 is its general? Socrates spoke of seven
 commanders of these troops, prudent and energetic.
 The moon (said he) is green and from it grows
 salt in the bowels of the earth, silver in stone.
 Mars breeds ill-tempered iron and from the womb
 of the Sun (so he maintained) all gold is born.

'Jupiter' he claimed 'is the father of tin
and all copper has Venus for its dam.
Quicksilver is the daughter of Mercury
and Saturn the mother of gloomy lead'.
Thus did the Greek associate with seven worlds
These seven melting metals ...

Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī

The full name of this prominent Shi'i philosopher and scientist, whose family hailed from Kāshān and who was born in Ṭūs in 597/1201 into a Twelver Shi'i family and died in 672/1274 in Kāẓimayn near Baghdad, was Naṣīr al-Dīn Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ṭūsī. The scope of Ṭūsī's works go well beyond philosophy and cover an array of fields such as *kalām*, mathematics, astronomy, ethics, and Sufism, not to mention political thought.

Ṭūsī began his career as an astronomer, then spent three decades in Nizārī Ismaili fortress communities of Persia, and finally found himself at the court of Mongol rulers who helped him to build his famous observatory at Marāghah. Amongst many other Twelver Shi'i works, he wrote the *Kitāb al-tajrīd* (The Book of Catharsis), the most important text of Twelve-Imam theology. Philosophically, Ṭūsī belongs to the school of Ibn Sinā and comments on a variety of Ibn Sinā topics, defending him against his opponents. Ṭūsī is in fact the reviver of Peripatetic philosophy in the eastern lands of Islam. It was thanks to him that Ibn Sinā's philosophy became once again part and parcel of Islamic philosophy and a living school of philosophy that has survived to this day. The great influence of Ibn Sinā on later Islamic philosophers such as Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā was in fact mostly through the works of Ṭūsī, especially his commentary on the *Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* (The Book of Directives and Remarks). This monumental work begins with Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī's criticism of Ibn Sinā's text. Ṭūsī, who responds to every criticism of Rāzī with an intellectual rigour rarely paralleled in any philosophical text, not only revived Ibn Sinā's thought but also created a work that has remained one of the main texts for the teaching of Islamic philosophy in traditional circles to this day. The commentary of Ṭūsī is considered by the *ḥakīms* of Persia as one of the four or five most significant texts of Islamic philosophy, and he must be considered as one of the most important philosophers of Persia.

Ṭūsī's devotion to Shi'ism is evident in his theological works while his writings on Sufism and gnosis (*'irfān*), such as his book written in Persian *Awṣāf al-ashrāf*

(Descriptions of the Noble), as well as his reverence for such figures as Ḥallāj, reveal his attraction for Sufism. He corresponded with such Sufi masters as Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī. As for jurisprudence, he commented on a variety of issues, particularly the laws of inheritance as is evident in his *Kitāb al-raml* (Book of Geomancy). His work *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* (Nāṣirean Ethics), dedicated to his Ismaili patron Nāṣir al-Dīn Abī Maṣṣūr (d. 655/1257) written under the influence of Miskawayh, is a classic work on ethics and is in fact perhaps the most important work of philosophical ethics in Islam.

Ṭūsī's works and research in astronomy and medicine, as well as physics, are also of the highest order and his contributions are significant. He is in fact one of the most important of Muslim scientists, but this aspect of his activities is beyond the scope of this book.

Ṭūsī stayed for three decades, from 624/1227 to 654/1256, among the Nizārī Ismailis in different places in Quhistān and Alamūt. It was during this time that he embraced Ismailism (as explained in his spiritual autobiography, *Sayr wa sulūk*), and composed several works pertaining to Ismaili thought, including a major opus entitled *Taṣawwūrāt* (Conceptions), also known as *Rawḍa-yi taslīm* (The Paradise of Submission). *Taṣawwūrāt*, which consists of twenty-eight 'conceptions', treats such topics as ontology, epistemology, cosmology, eschatology, imamology, and soteriology. The philosophical structure of the book is essentially Neoplatonic and presents the doctrine of *ta'lim* and *qiyāmat* (resurrection) and the inner meaning of religion. According to this work, there are three types of people. First, there are those whom Ṭūsī calls 'the people of contradiction' (*ahl al-taḍādd*); they are of an exoteric nature and live only in the world of appearances. Second are 'the people of gradation' (*ahl al-tarattub*), men of esoteric nature who have transcended the outward level of the *Sharī'ah* and are among the spiritual elites who have achieved unity with the inner meaning of religion. This station is achievable only through the knowledge given by a divinely guided teacher (*mu'allim-i rabbānī*) and by living a virtuous life based on metaphysical knowledge and not the endeavour of the human mind alone. Third are people of union (*ahl-i waḥdat*), the elite among the elite who have achieved unity with the *Ḥaqīqat* (Truth), thereby attaining perennial wisdom—the inner meaning behind the outer meaning of all religions.

The selections from Ṭūsī include first a portion of his autobiographical notes from the *Sayr wa sulūk* (Contemplation and Action) dealing mainly with his early education and search for truth. The *Sayr wa sulūk* takes the form of an extended letter written by Ṭūsī and addressed to the chief *dā'ī* of the Ismaili mission in Iran. The letter is clearly intended to be confessional that is, to present an account of Ṭūsī's personal search for knowledge of the Divine which led him to embrace the Ismaili faith, together with a declaration of his religious convictions. But the philosophical and theological content of the work gives it special importance in the collection of those writings of Ṭūsī's that have come down to us, because the author

has also an expository purpose too which manifests itself in his highly skilful and explicit exposition of the Ismaili doctrine of *ta'lim* and *qiyāmat*.

In the second section of this chapter, we have included part of *Taşawwūrāt* which deal with three themes: (1) the doctrine of the intellect, soul, and epistemology, which is basically Ibn Sīnīan in concept but integrated into the *qiyāmat* doctrine; (2) the issue of good and evil with which Ṭūsī deals metaphysically, according to which good has substantial reality whereas evil is nothing but the privation of good; and (3) the esoteric hermeneutics of the verses of the Qur'ān on the origin of the creation by God, and the narrative of Adam and Iblīs, which represent the *qiyāmat* doctrine. All these themes are interlinked. They deal with the acquisition of both theoretical and practical knowledge for the perfection of the human soul.

M. Aminrazavi

CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION

Sayr wa sulūk

Reprinted from Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Sayr wa sulūk*, ed. and tr. S. J. Badakhchani as *Contemplation and Action: The Spiritual Autobiography of a Muslim Scholar* (London, 1998), translation pp. 26–47.

As a result of predetermined decree and design (*bi-ḥukm-i taqdīr wa ittifāq*), I was born and educated among a group of people who were believers in, and followers of, the exoteric aspects of the religious law (*sharīʿat*). The only profession and vocation of my near relatives and kindred was to promulgate the exoteric sciences. From the time that [the faculty] of discrimination began to stir within myself, I grew and thrived listening to their opinions about both fundamental principles and derived rulings (*uṣūl wa furūʿ*) [of Islam]. I assumed that, apart from this way, there could be no other religious teaching or method. But my father, a man of the world who had heard the opinions of different kinds of people and had [received] his education from his maternal uncle who was one of the attendants and students of the chief *dāʿī* (*dāʿī al-duʿāt*), Tāj al-Dīn Shahrastānī, was less enthusiastic about following these regulations. He used to encourage me to study [all] the branches of knowledge, and to listen to the opinions of the followers of [various] sects and doctrines.

Then it happened that one of the students of Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī—may God have mercy on him—came to the region. His name was Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāsib, who had acquired a first-rate knowledge in a variety of philosophical subjects, especially in the art of mathematics; he had previously been a friend and acquaintance of my father. My father suggested that I should learn from him and frequent his company; so I began to study mathematics with him.

Frequently, in the course of speaking—may God have mercy on him—he would deprecate the exotericists, and explain the unavoidable inconsistency of those who blindly follow the rules of the *sharīʿat*, and I would find his discourse appealing, but whenever I wanted to get to the bottom of what he was saying, he would refuse, remarking, ‘That which is the core and essence of the truth cannot yet be mentioned to you, for you are young and do not have experience of the world. If you grow up and are successful, seek for it until you attain it’. Occasionally, as a piece of advice, he would say, ‘It is possible that the truth [may be found] among people who are, in the eyes of the group that you know, the most contemptible people’, and he would quote this verse [in which the unbelievers say to Noah]: ‘We see not any following thee but the vilest of us, in their apparent opinion’ (11:27). Then he would say, ‘You should not pay any attention to whether or not someone has an ugly appearance. If, for example, you find truth with the idolaters, you should listen to them and accept it from them’.

In short, it became clear to me from being in his company that whatever I had heard or seen up to that time [on religious matters] was without foundation. I understood that the truth was in the possession of another group and that I would have to strive hard to attain it.

Not long after this, worldly affairs required him [Kamāl al-Dīn] to move away from the region. [Also at this time] my father departed from this world, and I left my home in search of the truth, intending to acquire the knowledge which guides people to the happiness of the next world. Following the instructions of my father, I studied every subject for which I could find a teacher. But since I was moved by the inclination of my thoughts and the yearning of my soul to discriminate between what was false and what was true in the differing schools of thought and contradictory doctrines, I concentrated my attention on learning the speculative sciences such as theology (*kalām*) and philosophy (*ḥikmat*).

When I first embarked upon [the study of] theology, I found a science which was entirely confined to practices of the exoteric side of the *sharīʿat*. Its practitioners seemed to force the intellect to promote a doctrine in which they blindly imitated their ancestors, cunningly deducing proofs and evidence for its validity, and devising excuses for the absurdities and contradictions which their doctrine necessarily entailed.

In short, I derived some benefit from enquiring into this science, to the extent that I came to know something of the divergence between the sects. I came to understand that [with regard to] the knowledge of truth and the attainment of perfection on which happiness in the hereafter depends, men of intellect agreed in one way or another, summarily but not in detail, on the affirmation of such a truth and a hereafter. However, there was a primary disagreement about whether one could reach the desired objective solely through intellect and reason, or whether, in addition to these, a truthful instructor (*muʿallim-i ṣādiq*) was required. All people are accordingly divided in this respect into two branches: those who believe in reason (*naẓar*), and those who [in addition to reason] believe in instruction (*taʿlīm*). Moreover, those who believe in reason [alone] are divided into different schools—which is in itself a lengthy subject—whereas those who believe in [the necessity of] instruction are a group known as the Ismailis. This was my first acquaintance with the religion of the *Jamāʿat*.

As the science of theology proved fruitless, except for an acquaintance [it allowed] with the positions of the adherents to [various] doctrines, I became averse to it, and my enthusiasm to learn [more about] it lost its momentum. Then I started [to study] philosophy. I found this science to be noble and of great benefit. I saw that among the groups [into which] mankind [is divided], the practitioners of this discipline were distinguished by their allocation of a place for the intellect in the recognition of realities, and by their not requiring blind imitation (*taqlīd*) of a particular stand. Rather, in most cases they build the structure of religion in

accordance with the intellect, 'except what God wills' (7:188). However, when the discussion reached the desired objective—that is, the recognition of the True One (*ḥaqq*), the exalted, the most high, and knowledge of the origin and the return (*mabda' wa ma'ād*)—I found that they were on shaky foundations in these matters, for the intellect (*'aql*) is incapable of encompassing the giver of intellect (*wāḥib-i 'aql*) and the origins (*mabādī*). And because they rely on their own intellect and opinion, they blunder, they speak according to their own conjectures and whims in this field, using the intellect [to arrive] at knowledge of something which is not within its scope.

To sum up, my heart was not satisfied with what they said in these matters, while my desire to attain the truth was not diminished. In my exposition, I shall mention some more aspects of this matter. Many benefits, however, were obtained from this investigation into philosophy, one of them being that I came to know that if in any existing thing a perfection is potential, it cannot change from potentiality into actuality by itself without being affected by something outside itself, because if its essence were sufficient to bring that perfection from potentiality into actuality, the change would not be delayed. Indeed, the attaining of that perfection would have been simultaneous with the existence of the essence. We can take bodies as an example of this: motion is [always] potential in them. Without the effect of something else, that motion is never actualized; otherwise all bodies would be in [perpetual] motion. But when another thing exerts an effect on a body, that potential motion (*ḥarakat*) becomes actual. In this case the other is called the 'mover' (*muḥarrik*) and the body is called the 'moved' (*mutaḥarrik*).

Once this proposition had been established and my soul was satisfied of its truth, my attention was drawn to the point that was made in the science of theology, about the primary disagreement among mankind being whether knowledge of the truth is attainable solely through the intellect and reason, without instruction from any teacher, or whether, in addition to intellect and reason, an instructor is needed. Then I applied the [above] proposition to this situation and found that the truth lay with those who believe in instruction (*ta'limiyān*), for knowledge and understanding in man is in itself [merely] potential, and its perfection can only be actualized in men of sound natures, [in whom] intellect and reason are to be found, when something external has exerted an effect on them. Thus, this perfection too can inevitably only be actualized by means of the effect of some other thing. [Accordingly], when that other bestows a perfection, the perfection [here] being knowledge (*'ilm*), the bestower, in accordance with the previous law, is called the 'instructor' (*mu'allim*) and the one on whom it is bestowed the 'instructed' (*muta'allim*), by analogy with the 'mover' (*muḥarrik*) and the 'moved' (*mutaḥarrik*).

It thus becomes clear that without the instruction (*ta'lim*) of a teacher (*mu'allim*), and the bringing to perfection (*ikmāl*) by an agent of perfection (*mukammil*), the attainment of the truth is not possible; that mankind, with its great number and

differences of opinion, is mistaken in its claim that the truth can be reached solely through the intellect and reason; and that the believers in instruction (*Ta'limiyyān*) are therefore correct.

Once this proposition had become clear, I began to investigate the religion (*madhhab*) of this group. But since I did not know anyone who could describe the nature of their doctrine objectively, and could only hear about their beliefs from people hostile to them, and since I knew that I could not rely on a person's prejudices about his enemy, I was unable to get to know [this group] as I should, and out of fear I was unable to disclose my secret.

In short, I spent [quite] a period of time thinking about this. Then, in the course of my search, I frequently heard from travellers to the [surrounding] countries about the scholarly virtues of the auspicious master, Shihāb al-Dīn—may God be pleased with him—and his deep insight into different fields of knowledge. Then I sought a suitable opportunity and, through the intermediary of a friend who had an association with him, I sent him a letter containing two or three questions about those points in the discourse of the philosophers which I had found to be contradictory and about which I also had some observations of my own. Then I was granted the honour of a reply from him—may God be pleased with him—in the handwriting of the master, the chief scribe, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ḥasan—may his glory endure—and in answer to the questions he said: 'For a reason which can only be explained face to face, I am not [in a position] to convey any scholarly communication [in writing].'

Shortly after this, I took the opportunity, while on a journey from Iraq to Khurāsān, to pass through the glorious territory of [Gird] Kūh—may God, the exalted, protect it—and for two or three days [was able to] be in Shihāb al-Dīn's company and hear something of the *da'wat* doctrines from his own mouth. I copied down his talks and derived much [benefit] from them. Since the requisites for staying with him and remaining in that place had not been prepared—for several reasons which I need not go into—I journeyed on from there to Khurāsān. A few days later, I happened to see a copy, in mediocre handwriting and antiquated paper, of the *Fuṣūl-i muqaddas* (Sacred Chapters) of [the Imam] 'Alā dhikrihi'l-salām, in the possession of an unworthy person who did not know what it was.

Obtaining [the text] with a ruse, I occupied myself day and night with reading it, and to the extent of my humble understanding and ability, I gained endless benefits from those sacred words which are the light of hearts and the illuminator of inner thoughts. It opened a little my eye of exploration (*chishm-i taṣarruf*) and my inner sight (*dida-yi bātin*) was unveiled.

Thereafter, my only desire was to introduce myself among the *Jamā'at* when the opportunity presented itself. At that time, in accordance with my inward motivation, I made such strenuous efforts that finally I succeeded. Through the good offices of the exalted royal presence of Nāṣir al-Ḥaqq wa'l-Dīn—may God exalt him—and

his compassionate regard for my improvement, I was granted the good fortune of joining the *Jamā'at* and entry among the ranks of the novices (*mustajībān*) of the *da'wat*, and thus my situation reached the point where it is now.

Nothing can be gained by the illuminated mind in listening to this story except weariness. However, due to the previously mentioned circumstances concerning his [Nāṣir al-Dīn's] cordial nature and sympathy for me, its narration seemed to me to be prudent. If God the exalted is willing, it will be covered with the veil of forgiveness and heard with consideration. This [exposition so far] has been a description of the exoteric situation.

From an esoteric perspective, however, when I had reached a position where I could understand—by the proof that has already been cited—that it was the followers of instruction who were correct, I concluded with no additional troublesome thinking that the true instructor can only be he who is the instructor of the followers of the truth. This person, through whose teaching souls move from potentiality to actuality, must therefore be the instructor of the *Ta'limiyan* [i.e., the Ismailis].

Then my mind became preoccupied with considering what particular characteristics would distinguish that instructor from other teachers, and what his instruction would be like. With due submissiveness, I beseeched God the exalted—may His greatness be magnified—to clarify and unveil this question, so that my heart might be appeased. Then I referred [myself] to the intellectual principles which I had already verified and the premises which had been made clear in the *Fuṣūl-i muqaddas*. I combined them, asked questions from here and there, and held discussions and debates with [other] novices (*mubtadiyan*), until gradually, through the stages which I will explain, the scheme of beliefs (*ṣūrat-i i'tiqādī*), as will be mentioned later on, became clear in my mind.

First, it appeared to me that the instructor through whose mediation the potential perfection of the instructed soul is actualized must [himself] be in a state of actual perfection, because he who is not actually perfect cannot perfect others; and if that perfection had been potential in him and become actualized afterwards, he also would have been in need of another instructor. As necessity dictates (*az jihat-i qat'ī-i ihtiyāj*), this would either result in an infinite regression (*tasalsul*), or end up with a teacher who has always been in a state of actual perfection. The evidence for the existence of such a person among humankind can be deduced both from philosophy (*ḥikmat*) and revelation (*sharī'at*).

As for philosophy, it has been stated by philosophers that the possessor of sacred powers (*quwwa-yi qudsiyyah*) has absolutely no need to acquire knowledge (*iktisāb*). Indeed, merely by focusing his soul and without having to go through the process of acquisition and active seeking, realities and knowledge become clear [to him] in their totality. As for revelation, it is maintained by the followers of the exoteric (*ahl-i ṣāḥir*) that the possessor of bestowed knowledge (*'ilm-i ladūnī*) receives it without the mediation of any instruction.

Consequently, the mind does not reject the necessity of the existence among human beings of an instructor who is the first among instructors and is absolutely perfect. The instructor [is necessary] in order that some may gain perfection through him, and others through the latter, so that the effusion of the primordial bliss (*sa'ādat-i nakhust*) might encompass the next level gradually, according to the order and degree which are ordained by the wisdom of the first origin (*ḥikmat-i mabda'-i awwal*).

When I passed this stage and another veil had been removed from my mind, I realized that the perfection to which the seeker directs himself is knowledge of the True One, the exalted, the most high, who is the origin of [all] beings. Between Him and the first instructor, whose knowledge of the True One, the exalted, the most high, is always actual, there cannot exist any intermediary, because if an intermediary is posited, he would first have to come to know the intermediary, and then through him the True One. Knowledge of the True One would also, therefore, be a [mere] potentiality in him, [waiting to be actualized] through someone else. If this were so, this other person would have to be the first instructor, not him. But, since we have already supposed him to be the first instructor, so the first instructor is the nearest person to God—may He be praised and exalted.

It only remained for me [to understand] what his knowledge of God—may He be exalted—would be like. While contemplating this, I remembered that in philosophy, in the section on the soul (*kitāb-i nafs*), it has been proved that the most self-evident knowledge, the surest intelligible thing, is the knowledge that non-material beings have of themselves, in which reasoning and acquisition of knowledge play no part. Moreover, it has been demonstrated in logic, in the apodeictics (*kitāb-i burhān*), that the only certain acquired knowledge (*'ilm-i yaqīnī-yi muktasab*) is that in which the effect becomes known through [its] cause. Whatever does not become known through a proof proceeding from cause to effect is not absolutely certain. In the case under consideration where the discussion is about the philosopher's knowledge of the First Cause (*'illat-i ūlā*), he would have to admit that there can be no certainty about that which has no cause.

Again, when the philosopher discusses the degrees of existents, he posits the First Intellect (*'aql-i awwal*), which is the First Effect, as the closest being to the First Cause. Necessarily, [the First Intellect's] knowledge of the First Cause is possible only because it is the First Effect. But when [the First Intellect] cannot be certain [in this knowledge], how could others expect certainty about it? Here, then, the philosopher has completely shut to himself the door on [reaching] the knowledge of God, which is in truth a disturbing and deplorable situation. This is one of the problems I mentioned at the beginning, which resulted in my dissatisfaction with the principles of the philosophers for arriving at the knowledge of the True One.

The aim of setting out these arguments here is not to show the weakness of the philosophers; it is rather to show how my recollection of these points demonstrates

that the level [of knowledge] of the first instructor cannot be the level of the First Effect [the First Intellect]. In fact, his rank must be higher than that of the First Effect, in order that his knowledge of the True One, the exalted, the most high, may be the noblest knowledge.

Here it is necessary to consider whether or not there can be any intermediary at all between the First Effect and the First Cause. Among most people of discrimination and reason, it is commonly held that there can be no intermediary between the First Effect and the First Cause. Now the *Ta'limiyyān* believe that all beings issue forth from God, the exalted, who is the first origin (*mabda' i awwal*), through the mediation of something which, in the terminology of the later scholars of this *Jamā'at*, is called His command (*amr*) or His word (*kalimah*). [According to them] the First Cause of the Universal Intellect (*'aql-i kull*), which is the First Effect, is God's command, because God is altogether beyond (*munazzah*) cause or effect.

It is of [crucial] importance to grasp this point, to verify [its] truth and eliminate falsity, because those who do not realize that it is true remain veiled from the knowledge of the True One. Indeed, whoever thinks over this discussion in fairness will realize that he must come to exactly this verdict, as explained by the followers of instruction (*aṣḥāb-i ta'lim*) about this matter of which he is ignorant. And this is because the philosopher says that 'from the Real One (*wāḥid-i ḥaqīqī*) comes forth only one entity'. For example, if two existents were to issue from it at the same time, the aspect from which the first existent issued would be different from the aspect from which the second issued. Thus, if these two different aspects were included in [the absolute unity of] His essence (*māhiyyat*), He would no longer be the Real One. And if the two aspects were external to [the real one], then the discussion about their origin would be concerned with how it is possible for two postulated existents to emerge [from it]. Since both these arguments are invalid, it is obvious that two existents cannot possibly come forth from the Real One at the same time. It follows therefore that the First Effect is one, and this is the First Intellect.

This explains the philosopher's view, but after this he forgets [the principle] which he knew that when only one existent comes forth from the Real One, it comes forth in every respect from the one aspect [of its unity], for if the production of two existents necessitates that there be two aspects, the production of one existent requires that there be one aspect. Thus, if they do not admit this [one] aspect, through which the First Effect has come forth from the first origin, it must mean that no existent has issued from it, and hence nothing has come into existence [at all]. It is thus demonstrated on the basis of the philosopher's own arguments which he must admit, that the existence of this [one] aspect is necessarily proven, but because of his negligence of this point, the path to the recognition of God has been barred to him.

However, the instructor who had not neglected this aspect named it the 'command' (*amr*) or the 'word' (*kalimah*), in accordance with the verse of the Qur'an:

‘Verily, His command, when He desires a thing, is to say to it ‘Be’ and it is’ (36: 82). This verse makes it clear that the issuing forth of existents from God depends on the expression ‘Be’ (*kun*), and the word ‘verily’ (*innamā*) in Arabic serves the purpose of pinpointing [the scope of the expression], thereby making clear that the command is an expression for that word. The proof for the existence of this aspect, which only the people of *ta’lim* have established, can also be deduced from philosophy and revelation (*sharī‘at*). However, those who cling to only the exoteric aspects of these two methods remain deprived of, and veiled from, the knowledge of it.

There is no doubt that this aspect, the command or the word [of God] is not something additional to His sacred Essence, insofar as He is He, the exalted—otherwise another intermediary would be required for the origination of that one [i.e., the First Intellect]—but from the point of view where [the command] is the cause of an effect, it is something additional. This additional entity, in reality, is the cause of the First Effect, because cause and effect are two concatenating (*idāfi*) entities, insofar as there can be no cause without a corresponding effect, and no effect without a corresponding cause. Whatever is relative is within the scope (*hayyiz*) of opposition, because opposition can only exist between two things, and duality is plurality.

Thus, where there is [a concatenation of] cause and effect, there is no escape from plurality, but plurality cannot be allowed for the first origin of existents, since plurality cannot exist without unity. Such being the case, the first origin, the True One—may His name be exalted—cannot, insofar as He is the first origin, be attributed with cause or effect, existence or non-existence, temporality or eternity, necessity or contingency, nor any of the other kinds of opposition, contradiction or concatenation. He is more glorious and exalted than to be the fount of two opposites, the origin of two contraries, the source of unity and plurality, the cause of the absolute and the non-absolute (*tanzīh wa lā tanzīh*). He is beyond any attribute by which something could be qualified, whether it be non-existent or existent, negative or positive, relative or absolute, verbal or spiritual (*lafzī yā ma’nawī*). He is beyond [all this], and also beyond the beyond (*tanzīh*), and so forth.

There is no doubt that no one maintains such pure unity (*tawhīd-i širf*), such unconditioned absoluteness (*tanzīh-i maḥḍ*) [of God], except the *Ta’limiyyān*; and none of the adherents of [the other] sects, nor any of their leaders, except the instructor of this group, has been able to go to the extent of unveiling this secret. This is because others talk about possibilities (*na-shāyad buwad wa shāyad buwad*), whereas he speaks from the position of ‘I recognize You through You, and You are my Guide to Yourself’.

From this [discussion], it becomes clear that, in the terminology of the philosophers, it is an error to speak of the First Cause in relation to God, but it is correct to apply it to His command which is the source of all existents. In fact, whatever attribute has been ascribed to the First Cause by distinguished philosophers and

people of knowledge (*ahl-i ma'rifat*) among the men of intellect, is a reference to His command, one facet of which is directed to the world of pure, eternal unity, the other to the world of multiplicity and contingency; but God as such is free from, and exalted above, both these facets. As has been expressed in the words of [one of] the leaders of the truthful people (*pīshwā-yi muḥiqqān*)—may the mention [of their names] be greeted—‘Whatever pertains to God, pertains to us’. However, the man of truth must not succumb here to either exaggeration (*ghuluw*) or underestimation (*taqṣīr*), because the pitfalls are many and the straight path, the true religion of God, which proceeds between underestimation and exaggeration, is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword-edge.

In connection with this [matter], a story from my own past experience has come to my mind. Although it may prolong this discourse, I shall relate it, so that, God willing, in accordance with the vindication proffered at the beginning, I may receive the necessary guidance. At that time, when I had not yet joined the *Jamā'at*, and had not yet acquired much understanding of the true religion (*madhhab-i ḥaqq*), I was engaged in a dispute with a jurist (*faqīh*) in Jājarm. In the course of the debate, the jurist denigrated the Ismailis. I asked the reason for this, and he said that they considered the Imam to be God, because they refer to their Imam with the words ‘our lord’ (*mawlānā*) which, in their opinion, could not be used except for God. Sometimes they say ‘our lord ‘Alī’ or ‘our lord Muḥammad’, and sometimes [when addressing God] they say and write, ‘O Allāh, our Lord (*Allāhumma mawlānā*)’, and so on. They seek from ‘our lord’ what should be sought through prayer from God.

I said that if he were to consider the matter fairly, [he would find that] the foundation of their belief (*qā'ida-yi madhhab*) is that, since God cannot be recognized except through the Imam, the relationship of the Imam to God in respect to his guidance is like that between a name and what it names. Do not ordinary people (*ahl-i 'urf*) use the same word both for the name and the named? They call Zayd ‘Zayd’ and also call his spoken or written name ‘Zayd’. It is because of this that one group have imagined the name to be the same as the named. Thus, if the Ismailis use the name of God [i.e., *mawlānā*] for that person who is the guide to God, they are not deviating from the rules of the philologist or from customary practice. For this reason, they are not guilty of exaggeration, and vilification is not appropriate for them. The jurist could give no reply to this argument, and because this vindication [of the Ismailis] was altogether pertinent, he acted fairly and accepted my explanation.

In terms of the implication of these principles, it became clear that there is a degree higher than those of effects. This is the degree of the [divine] command, which is the first of [all] causes and the origin of [all] degrees. On the one hand, it is an intermediary between the Creator and what is created, while, on the other, it is the final degree, the [point of] return of [all] beings, and the last of [all] existents.

The knowledge of the first, the command of the True One—praise be to Him—insofar as He is He, in other words from the aspect of absolute unity, is the knowledge of God by God (*maʿrifat-i khudā bi-khudā*), within the limits of the knowledge [implied in the verse]: ‘God bears witness that there is no God except He’ (3:18). This is the noblest degree of certainty, the most perfect mode of knowledge, unlike the knowledge of cause through effect which does not give certainty. For the truth about knowledge is, as they have said: ‘We have not known You as You should be known,’ [and in the words of the Qurʾān]: ‘They measure not [the power of] God in its true measure’ (6:91).

In the sciences of the truth (*ʿulūm-i ḥaqīqī*), it has been perceived that beyond the world of the senses there is another world, that of the intellect, which is related to the former in the same way as the soul is to the body. This is why it is called the spiritual world and the other the physical world. Corresponding to each sensible thing in this world is an intelligible entity in that world and corresponding to each person here is a spirit there, and corresponding to every manifest thing (*ẓāhir*) here, is a hidden one (*bāṭin*) there. Similarly, corresponding to every intelligible entity there is a sensible one here, and corresponding to each spirit there is a person here, and corresponding to each hidden entity there is a manifest one here. That intelligible entity is the source (*maṣḍar*) of this sensible one, and this sensible thing is the manifestation (*maẓhar*) of that intelligible one.

For example, if there were a sensible thing here which did not have an intelligible entity corresponding to it there, its appearance would be a deception, like a mirage or the hallucinations from which the delirious or the melancholic suffer. Just as a derivation (*farʿ*) cannot exist without a basic principle (*aṣl*) [from which it is derived], one should suppose that an intelligible which did not have a sensible here corresponding to it would be purely fanciful or imaginary with no reality at all, for no existent can be left floating free (*muʿaṭṭal*). The realm of witnessing (*shahādat*) and the realm of unseen (*ghaybat*), the creation and the command, that is to say the two worlds, the physical and the spiritual, have been disclosed in the word of the revelation.

As for the word of the exalted Creator—which is the sustainer of existents in the world and that by which each of them reaches its perfection, originating from it and returning to it—if it had no connection (*taʿalluq*) to the sensible world, the latter would have never come into existence. Since there is such a connection, which is of the same kind and therefore has to be perceptible to the senses, the command and the word must inevitably be manifest in this world, and the locus of its manifestation (*maẓhar*) must be in the form of an individual human being who appears to be like other humans, [one who] is born, grows old and succeeds to the one before him in a continuous line, so that it [the command] will be preserved in perpetuity [among mankind]: ‘And had We made him [the Prophet] an angel, We would have certainly made him a man, and disguised [him] before them in garments like their own’ (6:9).

In the world of pure spirituality, it [the command] is the possessor of infinite knowledge and power; all forms of knowledge and perfections pour forth from it upon the intellects and souls: 'We were shadows on the right-hand side of the Throne and praised Him, so the angels praised Him'. This being is the command or the word of God; its rank is higher than that of possible things and effects, both of which are obedient and subservient to His command: 'None is there in the heavens and the earth but he comes to the All-merciful as a servant' (19:94). As for God as such, He is above both the worlds; He is free and absolved from [the oppositions of] unity and multiplicity, similarity and differentiation, reality and relativity (*ḥaqīqat wa idāfat*): 'Glory be to thy Lord, the Lord of majesty. [He is] above what they describe' (37:180). Any perfection that exists potentially in souls and individuals in the two realms is brought from potentiality to actuality by [His command], by the light of its instruction and the illumination of its guidance: '[Our lord is He] who gave everything its existence, then guided it' (20:50). Since in the beginning the existents came forth from the Command and by it they attain their perfection, it is their origin (*mabda'*) and to it is their return (*ma'ād*); it is the first (*awwal*) and the last (*ākhir*), and in it the circle of existence is completed: 'He is the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden; He has knowledge of all things' (57:3).

[The command], therefore, has necessarily three aspects: first, it is a person like any other; second, it is the cause, the instructor, the perfect one, and the others are its effects, the instructed, those who are lacking in perfection; and third, it [the command] is itself, and nothing other than it is worthy of being the cause of existence. The case is such that the three realms, which the people of the *da'wat* have named the realm of similitude (*mushābahāt*), the realm of differentiation (*mubāyanāt*) and the realm of unity (*waḥdat*), refer to these three aspects.

The proof that the human species is distinguished from other simple and composite species of the sensible world by the manifestation of [the command] among them is this: according to philosophers, the human being is the noblest in the whole of existence, because he is nobler than the other three kingdoms [i.e., mineral, plant and animal], and the three kingdoms are nobler than the elements [i.e., earth, water, air and fire], and the elements are nobler than their own corporeal bases, that is to say, matter and form. Thus, the noblest source has revealed itself in the noblest manifestation.

On the evidence of the revealed law (*sharī'at*) and the exoteric side of revelation (*tanzīl*), the trust (*amānat*) which the heavens, the earth and the mountains were unable to accept, was accepted by mankind: 'We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; and man carried it. Surely he is unjust and ignorant' (33:72). It was [only] after accepting this trust that mankind deserved the prostration of the intimate angels (*mala'ika-yi muqarrabīn*), who are the noblest in creation: 'And when we said to the angels, "Bow yourselves to Adam", they bowed themselves, except Iblīs' (2:34).

They testified to the descent of the manifestation of the person of divine knowledge (*shakhṣ-i maʿrifat-i bārī*) among the individuals of the human species when he appeared before them, and not among any other species of existents. And since his appearance in this world is because he is its perfection, as long as the world remains it can never be devoid of him: 'If the earth were devoid of the Imam even for a short time, it would be convulsed with all its inhabitants.'

It is also necessary that the people should have access to the lights of his guidance; otherwise they would be deprived of attaining perfection, and the usefulness of the manifestation would be rendered futile. Since it is necessary in the world of similitude that human beings should succeed one another through a recognized relationship (*alāqah*), once this relationship which indicates continuity and succession (*ittiṣāl wa taʿāqub*) is disregarded, the means of knowing him will also be closed to the people. The relationship can only be of two kinds, spiritual and physical. The spiritual relationship is the clear appointment (*naṣṣ*) of one by the other, and the physical relationship is that of the child to the father by way of succession. Through these two relationships, the close affinity between these individuals becomes known, and [the meaning of the revealed] evidence (*athar*), 'He made it a word enduring among his posterity' (43:28), and of the decree (*ḥukm*), "the offsprings, one of the other" (3:34), becomes clear. By testifying to these two proofs of birth and clear appointment, all the inhabitants of the world have access to the individual who is the locus of the manifestation of that light.

However, for the elite (*khawāṣṣ*) there is another sign, which is one of the vestiges of the world of unity (*ʿālam-i waḥdat*), and this is his uniqueness in the claim of 'I know God through God and I lead people to God.' This claim and call are vouchsafed to no one but him, so that from all the realms of being there may be testimonies to His eternal unity and the proof (*ḥujjat*) of God among the people may be fulfilled: 'Say, to God belongs the conclusive proof' (6:149). Thus, with these premises and propositions, the rank of the first instructor and the particular characteristics by which he is distinguished, such that he is absolutely perfect whereas others are imperfect and in need of [his power] to perfect them, becomes clear.

It remains to see what his teaching is, and how people can attain perfection through it. At this point after much deliberation and thought, and going back to an examination of the sayings of the eminent ones [i.e., the Imams], the following points impressed upon my mind.

Firstly, as the philosophers have explained, absolute certainty cannot be achieved by reasoning from effect to cause; but since the highest state [of knowledge] for the speculative rationalists (*ahl-i naẓar*) is to know cause from effect, no rationalist can come to know God.

Also, since knowledge, according to the rationalists, is a picture (*mithāl*) or form (*ṣūrat*), produced from what is known in the mind (*dhāt*) of the knower, and since any picture or form which is thus produced is different from that which is known,

the subject's knowledge must, in reality, be the estimated form (*ṣūrat-i mawhūm*) and not what is actually known. For this reason it has been said, 'Everything which you distinguish by your estimation, even in its most precise meanings, is turned away from Him and returned to you; it is fabricated by you and created like you'.

Since worship depends on knowledge and [human] knowledge is like this, what must worship be like? 'Surely you and that which you worship apart from God are fuel for hell; you shall go down to it' (21:98). Such is the ultimate stage the rationalist reaches in his quest for perfection.

The followers of *ta'lim*, however, believe in the principle (*qā'idah*) that everyone, whatever his degree may be, knows his own instructor, who in turn knows his own instructor, [and so on] to the first instructor, who knows God through God. As a result, everyone also comes to know God through God.

In the *Fuṣūl-i muqaddas* it is written: 'Everyone must know [God] through knowing me, since a person becomes a knower (*ʿārif*) through my knowledge and becomes a monotheist (*muwaḥhid*) through my monotheism. Then the reality of knowledge (*maʿrifat*), union (*ittiḥād*) and oneness (*waḥdat*) comes completely into existence, and the reality of worship becomes evident'. The evidence for such a judgment in the revealed law and the exoteric aspect of revelation is the text (*naṣṣ*) of the Qur'ān: 'Those are they whom God has guided, so follow their guidance' (6:90). And there is also the fact that in the realm of religious law, knowledge of God is not judged by the mere profession of the formula 'There is no god but God', unless the confession of 'Muḥammad is His Messenger' is added to it.

From the point of philosophy and rational thought, since both the worlds, the manifest (*ẓāhir*) and the hidden (*bāṭin*), are connected with one another, whatever is real (*bi-ʿayn*) there has its trace (*athar*) here, and whatever is real here has its trace there. One can therefore make deductions about the state of that world from the state of this world.

Reflection about this world makes it clear that matter is perpetuated through form, for no matter (*māddah*) can exist without form (*ṣūrat*), and that the multiplicity and differentiation of matter too is caused by the multiplicity and differentiation of form, because matter [whatever form it takes] is, in reality and essence, always the same. Consequently, whenever differentiation between these forms is eliminated, they become one with each other. For example, between the form of water and the form of air there is differentiation and multiplicity. But if water is stripped of its watery form and takes an aerial form [as steam], it becomes one with air and there remains no differentiation between them.

It is the same in that [hidden] world where souls, despite their various ranks, emanate from one origin and share in the same essence (*māhiyyat*), but they are perpetuated [individually] by virtue of the forms they acquire, which is the cause of their coming into this world. So if the form which is represented in the soul of the disciple is identical to that which is represented in his instructor's soul, and if

his position is such that he knows through the knowledge of his instructor, and the instructor is in agreement with his return, there will be no differentiation and multiplicity between their souls; and when the veil is removed, he will reach his instructor and be united with his oneness, and then he [the disciple] will have reached [his place of] return.

However, if there is differentiation in the forms of the two souls, such that [in] acquiring the form of his soul the disciple follows his own opinion and desire, or blindly imitates someone else who has followed his own opinion and desire, he remains in the darkness of purgatory (*barzakh*), covered by the veil of multiplicity, which is the shadow of existence, [as mentioned in the verse], 'No indeed; but upon that day they shall be veiled from their Lord' (83:15).

In this world, no one who seeks something can reach his goal unless, first of all, he has some capital of the same kind as that which he seeks and subsequently makes the necessary effort. For example, unless a farmer sows seed and cultivates the land, he cannot reap any harvest; if a merchant has no capital and does no business, he makes no profit; unless a hunter provides himself with bait and goes after the prey, he cannot catch anything; and so on and so forth. Similarly in this world, unless the seeker after perfection attains a favour from the primordial decree (*ḥukm-i mafrūgh*), which is equivalent to the merchant's capital—that is, having a pure soul and a sincere heart, as it is said in [the verse], 'Except for him who comes to God with a pure heart' (26:89)—and [unless he] has acquired something from the subsequent decree (*ḥukm-i musta'nif*), which is equivalent to the merchant's profit—that is, an act of submission (*taslīm*) based on the insight (*baṣīrat*): 'And whosoever submits his will to God, being a doer of good, has grasped the firmest handhold' (31:22)—and unless he yokes both of these together and immerses the subsequent in the primordial, he cannot attain the degree of perfection [indicated in the verse]: 'Theirs is the abode of peace with their Lord, and He is their protector (*walī*)' (6:127).

Here [in the physical world] this capital is a kind of premium; there [in the spiritual world] the believer's descent was created from the light of the True One: 'The believer has been created from the light of God, and knowledge is a light which God has cast into the heart.' If in the beginning, the believer had not been created from the light of God, he would not get as far as the return (*ma'ād*) implied in [the words], 'When God gives the command, He knows it', since in the return things go back to whence they started.

To sum up, from the above premises and the testimonies of intellect and religious law (*'aqlī wa shar'ī*), it became evident to me that the final step on the path of the seekers after truth is to be blessed with success in knowing their instructor and to become knowledgeable through his knowledge, as it is expressed in the *Fuṣūl-i muqaddas*: 'Knowledge of God is [through] knowledge of the Imam'.

THE GARDEN OF SUBMISSION, OR NOTIONS

Rawḍa-yi taslīm or Taşawwurāt

Translated for this volume by Latimah Parvin Peerwani from Naşir al-Dīn Ṭūsī's *Taşawwurāt*, ed. S. J. Badakhchani in his *The Paradise of Submission, or Notions* (Ph. D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1989), pp. 20–33, 35–39, 46–51.¹

The Doctrine of Intellect, Soul and Epistemology*Eighth Conception: Concerning knowledge of the human soul*

It is clear that body as such is not in action or motion. For if a body was in action and motion by itself, then inevitably all the bodies belonging to one category would have had similar action and motion. But we observe that, that is not the case. We see bodies which exhibit no action and motion, and bodies which exhibit actions and motions. So we conclude that those actions and motions are due to a power which is supra-physical.

We find that the motions of some bodies are uni-directional, for example, the motion of fire is from the centre to the circumference, the motion of water is from the circumference to the centre. So we conclude that water and fire exhibit that motion by [their] nature (*bi-tab'*). We call that motion natural motion. We find the motion exhibited by some bodies is of many kinds and is in different directions. The motion exhibited by some bodies is semi-voluntary and without consciousness and perception. We call [the mover of such body] vegetative soul (*nafs-i nabātī*). The motion exhibited by some bodies [21] is semi-voluntary, with consciousness, and perception, but in the consciousness and perception there is no discrimination. We call [the mover of such bodies] animal soul (*nafs-i ḥayawānī*). The motion exhibited by some bodies is voluntary with free will, consciousness, and perception, and with consciousness and perception there is total discrimination. We call [the mover of such bodies] human soul.

These two souls, i.e., the vegetative and animal, are divisible and subject to disintegration, so with the annihilation of their material body they are annihilated. But the human soul is indivisible and not subject to disintegration, therefore after its detachment from [its] material body it continues to exist. Although it is not a

1. The numbers in parentheses refer to the pagination of the W. Ivanow edition (Leiden, 1952) and the items in square brackets are additions of the translator. I have compared this translation with J. Badakhchani's translation of the same treatise and would like to acknowledge that changes have been made here based on his translation. I would like to express my debt of gratitude to him and the Institute for Ismaili Studies for making Dr. Badakhchani's translation available to me. A critical edition with English translation has now been prepared by S. J. Badakhchani under the title of *Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought* (London, 2005).

pre-eternal (*azalī*) substance, it is nevertheless a post-eternal (*abadī*) substance. The *azalī* is that which neither has a beginning 'from this side' [i.e., the past], nor has an end on 'the other side' [i.e., the future]. Whereas *abadī* is that which manifests a beginning 'from this side', but has no end 'on the other side'. The imaginative soul (*nafs-i khayālī*) is intermediary between the animal soul and the human soul. It faces the senses and sensibles [on the one end] and the intellect and the intelligibles [on the other end]. If it unites with the animal soul, then it can imagine by the organ of the material body and is needy of [that] organ; so by its destruction, it is destroyed. But if it unites with the human soul, it can preserve (*hifz*) the meanings without the physical organ and is independent of that instrument; so it continues to exist due to the subsistence (*baqā*) of the [human] soul, and participates with the soul in its felicity (*sa'adat*) as well as in its wretchedness (*shaqawat*).

When the [human] soul detaches from [its] material body, corporeality (*hay'at*) remains in it from the [faculty of] imagination (*khayāl*). The reward and punishment are determined [for it] according to the measure of whatever the imaginative soul has known and done; the imaginative soul brings the remembrance of reward and punishment with it. The identity of the souls in the next world will be due to it [i.e., *hay'at*]. A human being in this world is a spiritual being garbed by corporeality but in the next world he will be corporeal garbed by spirituality.

The human soul is neither body nor a faculty in the body because body accepts division but soul does not. Its substance which is nonmaterial and separate (*mufāriq*) is from the realm of the Intellect. Its connection with the body is of the type whereby it moves, transforms, controls and governs it unlike the connection of vegetative and animal souls [with their bodies]. The latter two, seek nutrition, growth and procreation mix with the humours; so inevitably they become corrupted by the corruption of the humours. Nay! the human soul intellegizes its own essence (*dhāt*). Its intellection of intelligibles and abstract things (*mufāriqāt*) is not through the physical organ. Rather, it perceives all these by itself. This is the reason why it is indivisible and not subject to disintegration, for anything which [22] accepts division has magnitude and quantity, whereas the soul has no magnitude and quantity. If the soul were subject to division, then in one part it would have been ignorant, and in another it would have been the knower of the same thing. But that is not the case with the soul *qua* soul. It is the first faculty from among the human faculties to become receptive (*qābil*) to the effusion of the Intellect, [it is] an entrance (*mawrid*) for spiritual beings, and a treasury of intelligible forms. It makes the distinction between things whose comprehension of form and meaning is impossible [without it]. It has [the power] to comprehend and know the power of coagulation (*quwwat-i in'iqādi*) which has no knowledge of its [own] state nor of the eminence of the vegetative power, and of the animal power which has no knowledge of its creation nor of the eminence and status of man, and to recognize the wisdom which exists in every form appropriate for each species.

Due to these reasons it is possible to conceive that the human soul is a simple spiritual substance. One and the same person can know many kinds of sciences, for instance, mathematics, natural sciences, logic and the divine sciences; and can remember many things from the Qur'ān, reports, poetry, parables, narratives, and traditions. None of these sciences becomes mixed up with the other sciences [in him]. He can give lengthy commentary [on each of these sciences] and all [these sciences] come to the ears of the audience part by part. Let us [compare] it, for example, with a house. If it has the capacity to give place to fifty people and they desire to give place to one hundred people in that house, it is not possible. [If they do so] then they have to go through a great deal of pain to squeeze them in [that place]. Whereas the soul never gets crowded with the forms of the objects of knowledge and hearing the intelligibles, rather the more [forms of objects of knowledge and intelligibles] it acquires, the greater becomes its skill for operation, the wider and deeper becomes its space for motion, and more intense becomes its joy and happiness due to that.

When you say, my head, my eyes, my ears, my heart, my tongue, my hands etc., those are not the essence of the human soul; they are in fact its additions (*iḍāfāt*). For instance, [the human soul] is like a king, and all these are its subjects, army, family, servants; [23] or it is like a perfect artisan, and they are all like his instruments and tools. Just as no king can function without an army, neither an artisan without his instruments, likewise the soul cannot function without [its instruments]; i.e., it must have a human physical body so that it manifests through it. It must have a head and brain so that it can think and make distinction among things; it must have eyes in order for it to see, ears to hear, 'heart' in order to know, tongue in order to speak, hands in order to handle [things], legs to walk, etc.

Also, the human soul is the first perfection of the natural, organic body having potential life. The soul is the prime mover of the parts [of the body], the transformer of the states and enshaper of the bodily matter. At the beginning [of its attachment to the body] it is material power just as there is a potential human person in the sperm—[i.e.], its final human perfection is in potentiality—its particular act is to become a separate form (*ṣūrat-i mujarrad*) gradually and progressively, and its entified life (*'ayn-i ḥayāt*) becomes actualized through Him the exalted.

All the soul substances are from one genus. The difference among them is due to their [difference] in knowledge, character traits, habits, and acts. The soul at inception is simple. Then it accepts the imprints of knowledge, opinion, analogy, moral traits, habits, and acts. Each one of these states becomes a form in the substance of each soul, and the soul becomes the matter for that form.

The eminence of the soul lies in its knowledge. We observe that a soul which becomes receptive to any kind of knowledge becomes more eminent than those souls which have not benefited from that knowledge. It is known that when a soul receives knowledge perfectly, it becomes more powerful [than those which do not

receive that knowledge perfectly]. Gradually it reaches the level of the souls of the great *ḥujjats*.¹ They surpass the other souls due to their receptivity to the lights of the exalted Word, and the purity of the substance of their [souls]. They become distinguished from the other souls due to the direct divine teaching of the Lord. They liberate the souls of people drowned in the ocean of matter, darknesses [of ignorance] and entangled in the chain of nature by benefiting them [from their knowledge] and making them take advantage [of that knowledge].

God, may He be exalted, has created everything. He has decreed that the sustenance [of a thing] on which depends its firmness and perpetuity should be from its own genus. The human body is composed of these [24] four elements; so its sustenance is also from these things which are these four elements. The human soul from the point of being potential intellect, and [its] intellect an actual soul, is from the realm of the Intellect. So its sustenance is from knowledge, and action [according to knowledge]. Its proof is this: if someone eats an abundant amount of healthy and delicate food with enjoyment till the end of his life but does not acquire knowledge, he will not become learned. But if he takes a small portion of food, enough to keep him alive, and acquires knowledge he becomes learned. Peace.

Ninth Conception: Concerning knowledge of the human intellect

It is the belief of some people that the innate intellect (*'aql-i gharīzī*) due to which human beings are distinguished from the other animals—which joins man at the beginning of puberty when the days of his childhood are over, and he remains intelligent due to it till the end of his life—is equal in all mankind. They also agree that any [property] which is equal [in all] those who possess it; its possessors have no differences among themselves. Although they mutually agree upon [the above matter] yet they contradict their own opinion by continuously disputing with each other on intelligibles, and they exhibit their opposition to each other.

They do not realize that if [human] intellects had been equal, then an intelligent person would not have opposed another. Their argument on the equality of all intellects is based on the proof that *taklīf* (religious prescription) is equally obligatory [on all believers having rationality]. They do not know that if there had not been gradation and hierarchical eminence (*tafāḍul*) in the intellects, then one person would not have been the giver of *taklīf* and the other obligated to accept that *taklīf* for himself; one a giver (*mu'addī*) and the other a receiver, one a giver of law and the other obligated to accept the law, one a teacher and the other a pupil, one a master and the other a disciple. If there had not been various measures and differences in the [human] intellects, then a common person who cannot make a

1. The Nizārī Ismaili *da'wah* organization consisted of three degrees. They were in descending order: *imām*, *ḥujjat* (proof), and *dā'ī*.

distinction between head and foot or sandals and gloves and a great philosopher who knows many things would have been equal.

It is also known that when [people] give reports [about something] everything in that [report] is neither absolutely correct nor absolutely false; some of it is true and some false. Whoever gives the verdict that [all human] intellects are equal, [then] from that verdict it becomes necessary that in any report they give about it there is a possibility of truth and falsehood. Therefore the two should be left as they are, and the truth and falsehood in that [report] should not be highlighted.

So there is gradation and hierarchical eminence in the [human] intellects. [25] At its inception it is the state of potentiality. [The philosophers] affirm that in the process of its actualization from the state of potentiality [to actuality] it goes through four stages: (i) material intellect ('*aql-i hayūlānī*'); (ii) intellect *in habitus* ('*aql bi'l-malakah*'); (iii) active intellect ('*aql bi'l-fi'l*'); (iv) acquired intellect ('*aql bi'l-mustafād*').

Material intellect is a faculty which [has the potentiality to] accept forms without matter. Though it does not accept those forms, it has the capability for [acceptance]; for instance a small child cannot be a teacher but he has the capability and possibility to become a teacher.

Intellect *in habitus* is a faculty which, as mentioned earlier, when it accepts abstract forms those forms become rooted in it so that it can easily move from *a priori* (*ḍarūriyyāt*) to speculative (*naẓariyyāt*) and from speculative to *a priori* ideas.

Active intellect is a faculty which accepts abstract forms. The capability to move from *a priori* to speculative and from speculative to *a priori* [ideas] is actualized in it; it is no more passive. So at any time it desires to refer to those [ideas], it is able to do so.

Acquired intellect is a power which has attained all the perfections mentioned earlier. Between it and the intellect which transforms it from potentiality to actuality a relationship is created, so every intelligible form which is in that one is manifested in this one, neither more nor less like a polished mirror when placed before a person.

Vegetative soul, animal soul, human soul and human intellect are from one root and one source but appear as four different [powers]. This may be compared to a person on a dark night standing two or three *farsangs*¹ away from a mountain on which a fire has been lit. Watching it from a distance he assumes that it is a star and not fire. Here the reality of this distance [from the source of fire] without any trace of [his] nearness [to it] could be applied to the vegetative soul [vis-à-vis its source].

When this person walks toward that mountain he at times assumes [this fire] to be a fire and not a star, and at times he assumes it to be a star and not fire. Here

1. *Farsang* or *farsakh*: a measure of distance about six kilometres.

[the simile of that man's] distance [from the source] but having some trace of his nearness [to it] could be applied to the animal soul [vis-à-vis its source].

When this person reaches very near to that mountain, he knows without any doubt that that [glow] is a fire and not a star. Here the reality of nearness [to the source of fire] with some trace of his distance [from it] could be applied to the human soul [vis-à-vis its source].

When the man reaches the top of that mountain, he sees clearly the environs of that mountain including everyone and everything in it by the light of that fire. [26] Here [the reality of] his very nearness [to the source] without any trace of distance [from it] could be applied to the human intellect. That is why they have said, 'The intellect is the light of human soul'.

Thus it is known that each one of the four [powers, i.e.,], vegetative soul, [animal soul, human soul,] and human intellect does not issue forth from a different source, but all of them come from the same root. They are [like] the four branches of a tree, or four streams of a brook, or four flames of a wick. The difference among them is due to their different acts and motions, and their nearness or distance in relation to the universal origin of existence.

The [definition] of sense (*ḥiss*), sensation (*ḥāssah*), sensible (*maḥsūs*), estimation (*wahm*), and imagination (*khayāl*): sense is a corporeal faculty (*quwwat-i jasadānī*), sensation is a spiritual faculty, and sensible is something which the sense perceives. The lower dimension of imagination is the senses; its higher dimension is the estimation. The lower dimension of estimation is the imagination; its higher dimension is [the human] soul; the lower dimension of [human] soul is estimation; its higher dimension is the intellect. The lower dimension of intellect is the [human] soul; its higher dimension is the Command. Peace.

*Tenth Conception: Concerning the purpose of the attachment
of particular souls to human bodies, and a short account of the composition of
the human body*

One of the reasons for the attachment of particular souls to human bodies is [that it manifests itself through the body]. Although in terms of reality the active agent (*fā'il*) produces the act, but in terms of relativity the effect of the act is manifested in the receptacle which is passive; in terms of the primordial decree the agent is the [divine] Command, but in terms of the subsequent decree (*musta'nif*) the effect of [its] act is manifested in the creation which is passive. In terms of meaning (*ma'nī*) the agent is the spirit but in terms of form (*shakl*) the effect of [its] act is manifested through the body which is passive. In other words, an active agent manifests itself through a receptacle, the [divine] Command through the creation, and the spirit through the body.

One of the benefits of this attachment is that the form of good in a good soul, and the form of evil in an evil soul which exists potentially in them. These two

souls *qua* souls are similar to mental existence, and so long as they do not manifest themselves in external existence, they cannot be distinguished [from each other]. The distinction between each one of the two souls, the progression of the good soul from the degree of possibility to necessity, and the declining of the evil soul from the level of the possibility to the lowest level of impossibility (*imtināʿ*) is through attachment to a body. The acquisition of knowledge, the attainment of experience and discipline (*riyāḍat*), the necessity of attaining eminence [27] and position, the administration of matters pertaining to livelihood, crossing the levels of perfections from [its] Origin to [its] return (*maʿād*), are possible only through this body which is composed of blood, flesh, and other matters.

There are some souls which, due to their innate eminence, perfection, and goodness, are fortunate to receive and accept directly the unlimited divine munificence (*jūd*),¹ effusion, and generosity. They receive [all those graces directly] by their essence (*dhāt*) without any instruments, and without time so, for them to give and to take has the same meaning. They are the divinely guided people possessing knowledge (*ʿālimān-i rabbānī*). The benefit of their attachment to the bodies is to train their souls by the [divine] light and guide them toward [their] perfection and completion so that they become prepared to receive perfection.

Their likeness is that of a teacher who brings himself down from the level of the teacher to the level of the pupil and teaches him first the alphabet, then gradually and systematically makes him cross the degrees [of knowledge] until he becomes a learned scholar and reaches the level of the teacher.

There are some souls which in their innate disposition are not perfectly good, but have the preparedness to become perfect[ly good]. These are the pupils treading on the path of salvation. The benefit of their attachment to the bodies is that through the training of the possessors of perfection they become capable of perfection, and whatever degrees of perfections are there in them in the state of potentiality become actualized through them.

There are souls which are evil; [nay] they are at the extreme level of evil and do not become receptive to any goodness, eminence, and perfection—i.e., they are rogues and villains who are not illumined by the light of knowledge, and do not take refuge beyond themselves in someone who could be their trustworthy (*wāthiq*) pillar.² The benefit of their attachment to the body is that the trace [of evil] which is concealed in them becomes manifest so that the good becomes distinct from bad, and pure from impure.

1. The text reads *wujūd* (existence).

2. The reference is to a long conversation of Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib with one of his foremost disciples Kumayl ibn Ziyād al-Nakhaʿī, in which the Imam besides other matters, discusses the characteristics of three categories of people. Cf. *Nahj al-balāghah*, text in Arabic, with commentary by Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 35; English trans., S. M. Jafery (New York, 1985), p. 600.

Another benefit: If the particular souls had not attached [themselves] to human bodies, then the edifice of the universe, the structure of existent things, the establishment of the divine proof, the execution of the divine Tradition (*sunnat-i rabbānī*) would not have been possible.

Another benefit: The macrocosm from the circumference of the highest sphere till the depth of the earth is one person called the Universal Man (*insān-i kullī*). The sign of a person reaching the degree of puberty is that he can reproduce like himself. When the macrocosm, which is the Universal Man, reached the height of its puberty it reproduced someone like itself who is the particular man (*insān-i juzwī*). He is the microcosm in the macrocosm in form, and macrocosm in the microcosm in meaning (*ma'ānī*, [or essence]).

It is known that no [28] existent thing is nobler than man in its perfection of creation and nobility in relation to the whole universe which he resembles. That is because man is a totality comprising the subtleties of the lights of the First Intellect; the traces (*ma'āthir*) of powers of the Universal Soul, the astonishing compositions of the spheres, various kinds of constellations, the motions of the stars; the traces (*āthār*) of the natural elements, variety of mineral substances, variety of vegetative forms, amazing structures of animals; stations of angels, *jinn*, man, devils; signs of land, sea, mountain, plain, inhabited land, desert, garden and spring, summer autumn, winter [seasons are] within himself.

They have struck the similitude of the human body—composed of four elements, which when separate and distinct from each other in form reject each other vehemently, but when combined and mixed with each other, are broken down in form by each other and become harmonious—to a Virtuous City (*madīna-yi fāḍilah*). Man is like a city, constructed of different things, having a fortified [physical] structure and a firm form. From head to foot all the parts [of his body], limb joints, blood vessels, bones, and nerves [resemble] the courtyards, streets, houses, treasuries, bazaar, shops, roads, etc., which a city should have. The intellect and soul are like a king and his minister; the external and internal senses, the faculties of feeding, attraction, digestion, expulsion, and any other faculty which belongs to the nature [of each one those faculties]. The acts of those faculties through motion specific to each one of them which finally manifests itself through each one in the body correspond to the pillars of the state, such as physician, teacher, people of other professions and degrees such as chamberlain, lawyer, porter, army, servant, domestic servant, subject, spy, postman, messenger, craftsman, merchant, and every builder through whom the structure and splendour of that city is completed, and the preservation of that city is possible due to their existence and through them.

The structure of the body and the form of the soul [attached to it] are the epitomes of the universe which the pre-eternal Pen has inscribed on the post-eternal Tablet by the primordial Command. Just as the human soul is nobler than all the

other souls, likewise the matter from which its body has been composed is also subtler than all kinds of matters.

[29] The wisdom of God the Exalted has decreed it so that all of man's dispositions (*taşarrufât*), movements, and acts should be intellectual; that in each one of [these acts] there should be discernment, and in each discernment verification (*taḥqîq*). Therefore, the matter of his body has to be more perfect in equilibrium; the form of his creation and the mode of his physical structure, posture, stature, and constitution should be nobler in relation to the other existents.

The human soul before its attachment to the body is a substance which contains things in the state of potentiality which are actualized through [the influence of] the spheres and stars. When the [human] sperm, which is potentially the whole human person, reaches the womb, it settles down there.

In the first month it is under the governance [*tadbîr*] of Saturn, because the spirituality of Saturn is the first one to have effect in the realm of natures [of the fertilized egg]. So the whole aqueous content [of the fertilized egg] becomes coagulated.

In the second month it is under the governance of Jupiter. The nature of Jupiter is constituted of heat and humidity which further the development and growth of the fertilized egg. [The nature of] its aqueous parts is dissolved and transformed to a clot of blood. Jupiter [’s influence] in a period of time makes the faculty of growth and feeding commence [in the clot of blood].

In the third month it is under the governance of Mars. The nature of the blood clot is dissolved and transformed to a fetus. In the period of the influence of Mars, if the heat increases and [the fetus] accept a little dryness, then its power of growth becomes stronger, and the passage for food for the fetus becomes open.

In the fourth month it is under the governance of the sun. Through [the influence of] the nature of the sun the marks of [various physical parts and organs] are manifested in the fetus. It rises from its place, the animal spirit originates in it, the embryo comes in motion, its limbs and organs become distinct, and the head, heart, and the rest of the parts of its body become manifest.

In the fifth month it is under the governance of Venus. By [the influence of] the nature of Venus and the domination of its spiritual powers on it, the creation [of the fetus] becomes complete, its physical structure reaches its perfection, the position of eyes and ears becomes manifest, the mouth opens, and the head between the two ears emerges.

In the sixth month it is under the governance of Mars. Through [the influence of] the nature of Mars, it acquires another sense and performs another kind of movement; its physical parts become distinct from each other; it acquires the sense of its whereabouts; it opens its mouth, moves its lips, licks with its tongue, and sniffs with its nose. At times it sleeps; at times it is awake.

In the seventh month it is under the governance of the moon. [The influence of] the nature of the moon works in it; the senses attain perfection, its stature becomes erect, the parts [of its body] become strong, the joints become firm, its movement becomes continuous, it feels the narrowness of its place and aims [30] to get out. If it is born in this month, it will survive and will be fully developed.

In the eighth month it comes again under the governance of Saturn. The heaviness and repose become manifested in the fetus. If it is born in this month it will not survive, because the eighth domicile is of the [constellation] of Pisces, and Saturn [in this domicile] brings all the powers [of the fetus] to a static state by its coldness and humidity so [if the fetus is born] it does not survive.

The ninth month is once again the turn of Jupiter. [Under its governance] the signs [of life], motion and spontaneity become manifest in the fetus. [Jupiter's] ninth domicile is the Pisces toward which it travels, and the fetus certainly exits from the womb and is born.

The parts of the body [of the fetus] which are firm and hold together become organs and limbs; those which are fluid are four kinds of humours; and what rises from the four kinds of humours in the form of vapour in extreme subtlety, purity, and transparency and permeates all parts of the body [it is called animal spirit (*rūh-i ḥayawānī*)].

The animal spirit originates from the heart; then it fills the nasal cavity; then the orifices of the eyes, the audible tubes of the ears, the passage of the tongue, and the rest of the organs from head to foot.

The external senses are five: touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight. From these [five], three, i.e., touch, taste and smell, are attained [by the baby] when it is in the womb, and the other two, i.e., hearing and sight, are attained by it when it is born. The interior senses are also five: sensorium, the form-giving faculty (*muṣawwirah*), [the faculty of] reflection (*mufakkirah*), estimation, and memory. They join the baby before it is born; each one manifests itself gradually and progressively in its own time; so does the discerning rational soul. It [manifests itself] in the brain first; from there it spreads to most of the remaining parts and organs of the body.

The sensorium is located at the beginning of the front part of the first lobe of the brain. It is called sensorium because it has contact with every sense and each sense associates with it; for example, what the eyes see, the ears hear, the [sense of] touch feels, the [senses of] taste and smell experience, come to [the sensorium] first. [Hence] it is called the resort (*mawrid*) of the senses and treasury of sensible forms.

The form-giving faculty is located at the beginning of the first part of the second lobe of the brain. If this power is obedient to and supports the human intellect, it is called reflective [faculty]; if it is occupied with the body and bodily things and obedient to imagination and estimation, it is called imaginative faculty (*mukhayyilah*).

The [sensible] forms [received by the senses] are all entrusted to the *sensus communis* [31] which then passes them on to the [faculty of] imagination located in the forefront of the third lobe of the brain. What the form-giving faculty has entrusted to it is either present [in it], or it retains it.

The estimative faculty is located in the fourth lobe of the brain which is in the middle of the head; the faculty of memory is located in the hind part of the brain. It retains all the forms entrusted to it so that at the time of need it reminds one [of them] through the [power of] remembrance (*dhākirah*).

The faculty of imagination guards the physical forms. The animal also associates with man in having this [faculty]. But [the physical forms are retained in the faculty of imagination] so long as the animal's spirit, which is subtle vapours of the humours, permeates through his body. Due to the continuation and persistence of his soul, a form (*hay'at*) from his imaginative faculty remains with it forever, continuously, eternally.

The similitude of the *sensus communis* is that of the master of postal information; to him each one of the possessors of information brings a letter mentioning about something, and he collects all [this information]. The similitude of the form-giving faculty is that of the carrier of a mail bag; the master of postal information gives him the letters to be put in the mail bag. The similitude of the reflective faculty is that of a king to whom the carrier of a mail bag brings the bag of letters and entrusts it to him so that he reads them and becomes aware of the good and bad written in them. The similitude of the faculty of memory is that of a treasurer to whom the king entrusts those letters so that he stores them in the treasury. The similitude of the faculty of remembrance is that of a person who, when the king needs that information another time, submits it to him.

When a child is born, his life and death, comfort and pain, affluence and poverty, honour and disgrace, and the other contradictory [matters], which will take us too long to enumerate, are destined for him on his horoscope decreed by the conjunctions of the stars, the influence of the planets, the influence of the fixed stars and their good and bad effects, which by the divine Decree are for him. But the Will (*irādat*) of God, the Almighty and Exalted, which is the creator and governor of the spheres and stars, is above all [that is decreed by the horoscope, and the latter is] connected to His Command and Wish. Peace be upon the one who heeds guidance.

Eleventh Conception: Concerning the essential differetia of each genus and the engendered beings: the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, and the human

Minerals on account of having coagulative [power] (*in'iqād*) are associated with mineral substances. The essential *differentium* of mineral substances is their power of coagulation. Mineral substances are associated with plants on account of [32] [both

having the power of] coagulation and some [common] properties. The essential *differentium* of the plant [kingdom] is the power of growth. Plants are associated with animals on the basis of [both having the power of] coagulation, some [common] properties, and the [power of] growth. The essential *differentium* of the animal is sense perception and motion. An animal is associated with man on the basis of having [the power of] coagulation, some [common] properties, the [power of] growth, senses and motion. On the essential *differentia* of man there are three views pertaining to three categories of people: the multitude, the elite, and the highest elite.

First view: When the multitude found man [having the power of] speech, they assumed that the eminence of man over the animal was due to this ordinary, external speech; so they concluded that his essential *differentium* was this external speech.

Second view: The elites have said that those who have accepted this ordinary external speech as the essential *differentium* of man have done so on the basis of one aspect which is judgment from the point of the observer, and not from the point of the object of observation; the latter has been withheld and its states not discussed. [According to them] the essential *differentia* of everything is in reality that in which no other thing can associate with it. But we see that this ordinary external speech assumed to be the essential *differentium* of man is not true because a parrot, which is from the animal [kingdom], can be taught this external speech. So beyond this external speech there should be another virtue (*faḍīlat*) which cannot be shared with anyone, and that virtue is discerning reflection (*tamyīz-i fīkr*). Therefore, [the essential *differentium* of man] is in reality the power of discernment, and not this external speech. So they concluded that the discerning reflection is the essential *differentium* of man.

Third view: The highest elites have said that those who have sought another virtue as the essential *differentium* of man beyond this external speech which they have judged to be discerning reflection, are correct to a certain extent. But they too have not understood the ambiguities of the mystery of this issue and have not been able to go beyond the opinion of those who consider that the essential *differentium* of anything is that in which no other thing can associate with it. [They say], 'We observe certain animals which have the power of discernment due to which they know something about the beginnings and consequences of their work, [and] in what lies their well-being and corruption'. For example, a bird knows that the perpetuity of its species lies in its egg, that whatever is in the egg is in the state of *potentia*, and by heat becomes actualized, and that heat [33] is attained when it puts the egg under its wings. The turtle has no wings, but it knows that whatever is in the egg is in the state of *potentia* and can be actualized by heat. So it repeatedly and continuously blows warm breaths over it until it finds the baby turtle has come into being in the egg. It knows its time [for coming out, so when the time is ripe] it breaks the egg and brings the baby turtle out.

An intelligent person knows that [such an act of a bird is due to] essential discerning reflection which resembles man's discerning [power]. So this discerning reflection is not absolutely specific to man. Since it is not specific to him, it is not his essential *differentium*. Therefore his essential *differentium* has to be his greatest specific quality (*khāṣṣiyyat*). This greatest specific quality is to impart knowledge by the act of imparting, and to accept [knowledge] by the act of listening. Accordingly a real human being and his essential *differentium* is that he acquires knowledge from those who are above him [in knowledge] according to the principle of acceptance, and imparts it to those who are below him [in knowledge] according to the principle of effusion (*fā'id*). Peace.

Good and Evil

Fourteenth Conception: Concerning good and evil, that evil does not exist in initial origination, the nature of the evil that appears in this world

Since people see good and evil in this world, some assume that good has a source and evil has a source. Zoroastrians believe that Yazdān is one source and Ahrīman is one source. They relate light and goodness to Yazdān, and darkness and evil to Ahrīman. There is corruption in this concept. The one who says that there are two sources should be asked, 'According to your opinion there are two sources. Tell us; are these two sources equal without being more or less than the other in existence, might and [power of] encompassing? Or one is prior in goodness and one is prior in evil?' If they are not equal, then it necessitates that one is perfect and the other is deficient. The perfect is [obviously] encompassing and the deficient is encompassed; so the one which is greater and encompassing is prior in being the source to the one which is deficient and encompassed. Therefore the two sources for good and evil according to their claim do not exist; everything has [or comes from] one source which is His Exalted Command.

It is known that goodness is a concomitant of perfection and perfection is a concomitant of goodness, while evil is a concomitant of deficiency and deficiency is a concomitant of evil. So where there is absolute perfection there is sheer goodness; where there is absolute deficiency there is sheer evil, and where perfection and deficiency are mixed there good and evil are also mixed. For example, the First Intellect is nobler in substance, more perfect existentially, and higher in rank than all the existent beings; so absolute perfection belongs to it, and wherever it is there is sheer goodness.

The Universal Soul is more deficient in substance, existence and rank than the First Intellect. One of its dimensions is toward perfection and the other dimension toward deficiency. The mixture of perfection and deficiency belongs to it, because the Universal Body is deficiency itself. To it belongs the absolute deficiency; so

wherever it is, there is sheer evil. According to this measure there are three realms: (1) the intellectual realm which is sheer good; (2) the spiritual realm (*‘ālam-i naḥsānī*) which is a mixture of good and evil; and (3) the physical realm which is sheer evil. Each one of these realms has its people. The people of the intellectual realm are the people of unity (*ahl-i waḥdat*); the people of the spiritual realm are the people [36] of gradation (*ahl-i tarattub*); and the people of the physical realm are the people of contradiction (*ahl-i taḍādd*). The rule of contradiction is: the people of the world contradicting each other; the rule of gradation is: the people having the divine Law (*sharʿ*) agreeing with each other; and the rule of unity is: unification among the people of resurrection (*ahl-i qiyāmat*).¹

Whoever turns his face away from the people of the world contradicting each other [and turns toward] the people having the divine Law agreeing with each other, and then from the people having the divine Law agreeing with each other to the people of resurrection united with each other no trace of evil in itself remains due to his relation with the latter. His physical acts become analogous to spiritual traces (*athar*) and his spiritual traces become analogous to intellectual lights.

Also, goodness effuses essentially from the donor of goodness (*wāḥib al-khayr*), whereas evil comes about accidentally in the way. For instance, imagine goodness like a grain of wheat thrown into the soil and watered, and evil like the foam which comes into existence from the dust particles in the passage of water which settle on the surface of water. It is known that foam manifested from the passage of water is not the essence and substance of water. At times it happens that the dominance, scale and power of [foam] on the water reaches such a degree that water is not seen, and it is assumed that there is no water and everything is foam. [Likewise] at times it happens that the dominance, scale and power of evil over good reaches to such a degree that good is not seen, and it is assumed that there is no goodness and everything is evil, and before long the light of goodness declines and corruption is manifested in the world. One of its reasons is the good is weak at the start, but powerful in the end, while evil is powerful at the start but weak in the end. When the good which is weak at the start begins, evil which is contrary to it becomes manifest with its initial power. Since the good is weak [initially], evil appears

1. The anthropology developed by Ismaili thinkers of the Alamūt period of Ismailism represent three levels of people: (1) the people of contradiction (*ahl al-taḍādd*) who exist only in the realm of the external (*ẓāhir*) dimension of the Islamic *Sharīʿah*; (2) the people of gradation (*ahl al-tarattub*) who have gone beyond the external dimension of the *Sharīʿah* to the inner dimension (*bāṭin*) of the *Sharīʿah*; they consist of many grades or degrees; (3) the people of union (*ahl al-waḥdah*) who have arrived at the realm of the *ḥaqīqah* of all *sharāʾiʿ* and realized the inner meaning, the *bāṭin* behind the *bāṭin*, and see only the truth of all *sharāʾiʿ* and the spiritual reality of the divinely guided teacher, i.e., the Nizārī Ismaili Imam. Cf. F. Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 324–410. Quite similar concepts of cosmology and anthropology including similar terminology is seen in the Kubrawiyyah Sufi Order of Central Asia, cf. Kubrawī Sufi ʿAzīz al-Dīn Nasafī's (d.c. 700/1300–1) *Kitāb insān al-kāmil* (Tehran, 1941), pp. 178–179.

powerful, but in the end in reality the power of the good which begins gradually reaches its [highest] limit, and evil diminishes and becomes extinct.

Destiny (*qadar*) is the first [divine] measure (*taqdîr*) which proceeds through the primordial Command to the First Intellect. Decree (*qaḍāʾ*) is the primordial prescription which is inscribed by the primordial Command on the First Tablet. The meaning of the first [divine] measure in terms of similitude is when someone wants to build a house, he first lays the foundation of the walls and the rooms. The meaning of the decree in terms of similitude is that house and whatever is necessary for it become constructed. Two angels one called Saʿîq¹ and the other called Shāhid are appointed as guardian angels over destiny and decree so that they raise all the existent things to perfection and the end which is specific to each one, and for which they have been created. Their aim is universal goodness; the good is concealed in their motion. This evil which comes in the way is not due to decree [37] and destiny, but to the sensory, imaginative and estimative veils which lie before the reflective consideration (*naẓar-i fikrî*) and insight due to which our choice (*ikhtiyār*) [of action] does not come out right.

Since our knowledge and foresight cannot encompass the consequences of affairs, and we are not able to choose the real (*ḥaqq*) by our opinion and analogy (*qiyās*), therefore by choosing that which is not real evil comes into existence. For instance the need [to learn from a teacher] is specific to the pupil and his good lies in that. To be independent [of being a pupil] is specific to a teacher and his good lies in that. If we do not submit ourselves as pupil [to a teacher] and desire to become a teacher, then we forfeit our need specific to us in which lies our good, and conceive of becoming independent [from being a pupil] which is not specific to us and in which lies our evil; then we come out of that good and fall into evil. We take refuge in God from that.

Also, you must know about universal evil and particular evil. The example of particular evil is fire sets in the house of an ascetic and burns his gloves and clothes. [The example of] universal evil is the existence of fire is removed from the world. Also, particular evil is there is a flood which destroys the houses of people, with the children, the weak and the poor. [The example of] universal evil is the existence of water is removed from the world. So the term evil is not applied to the essence and act of fire and water in reality, but figuratively, relatively and accidentally.

Also, existence in this world must have a cause, while nonexistence requires no cause. Wealth requires a cause while poverty must have no cause. Day, for example, has a cause but night has no cause. Day has a cause, and that cause is the sun which shines from the horizon of the sky, while night has no cause because when the sun sets the night comes by itself. So, just as privation of existence is nonexistence, privation of wealth is poverty and privation of day is night, likewise privation of good is evil.

1. The text reads 'sābiq' which is obviously an error of the copyist.

Now, [if someone says], 'Just as particular intellects of the people possessing intellects are the effects of the First Intellect which has come into existence by the Divine Command, similarly the particular ignorance of the ignorant people is the effect of the primordial ignorance—the concomitant of contradiction—which is the counterpart of the Intellect' [In response to this it should be said], 'That [statement] is cunning; it is satanic, it seems intelligent but is not intelligent'.¹ The reason why there is contradiction and gradation in souls is that a soul may fall besides the gradation [leading] toward perfection in such a way that when it is actualized from potentiality, it becomes the best creation; a soul may fall besides contradiction [leading] toward deficiency in such a way that when it is actualized from potentiality, it becomes the worst creation; and a soul [38] may fall in the middle [position], its one dimension facing toward the good and another dimension facing toward the evil. Just as there is contradiction and gradation among souls, likewise in physical matter too there is contradiction and gradation due to which some [physical matter] falls on the high side, some on the low side and some in the middle.

Thus according to the principle, 'Everything returns to its root' some matter may be good and some souls good; the former is fit for the latter and the latter takes possession of it. There may be evil matter and evil soul; the former takes possession of the latter and the latter is fit for it. There may be matter halfway between good and evil and similarly such a soul; the former becomes receptive to the latter, and the latter governs the former.

If someone says, 'Since evil souls manifest evil due to the evil substance of which they are constituted, so why do the 'rightful people' (*muḥiqqān*), peace be upon their remembrance, struggle (*jihād*) against them and give them religious prescription (*taklīf*) in order to make them good?' Its answer is this: as already said in the introduction, good souls are [constituted] of true substance, and evil souls of unreal (*bāṭil*) substance. In this world, which is the realm of similitude (*kawn-i mushābihat*), good and evil both look alike in form and appearance. When the 'rightful people' invite (*da'wat*) [the people to the Divine Command] they do not claim, 'We transform evil to good'. Rather they give the Divine Command to the people of the world on the basis of which the good people become distinct from the evil ones; and the good ones according to the rule, 'the *mu'mins* (believers) are created from the [light of] the Real so when they are commanded by the Real by it, they truly know it', so they separate from the evil ones; and the evil ones according to the rule, 'They struggled against it wickedly and arrogantly though their souls acknowledged them' [Qur'ān, 27:14], separate from the good ones. Thus when this distinction takes place, the evil ones will have no excuse or argument according to the rule, 'So that mankind might have no argument against Him the Exalted, after

1. This quotation seems to refer to a tradition of the sixth Shi'i Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq (d. 148/765), cf. *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfi* by al-Kulaynī, ed. with commentary by Ḥajj Sayyid Muṣṭafawī (Tehran, 1385/1965), p. 11, tradition no. 3.

the [coming] of the apostles' [Qur'ān, 4:165]. The 'rightful people,' peace be upon their remembrance, in the beginning according to the rule, 'Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation' [Qur'ān, 16:125], make them attentive to the divine proof. After that, according to the rule, 'Have the disputation with them in the best manner' [Qur'ān, 16:125], they lay the rule of the sword on them, and by combat and warfare bring them out from the realm of ambiguity.

The invitation [to the Divine Command] and religious prescription of the 'rightful people' is not for evil ones so that evil is transformed to good, but for good ones. The latter at first in this world due to the acquisition of sins, mistaking something not right [according to the Divine Command], fall out of their innate original nature (*fiṭrat*); so by [following] that invitation and religious prescription—the similitude of which is the nature of an elixir which affects the substance of copper and transforms it to standard pure gold—those acquisitions by their memory which are not right [according to their original innate nature] are erased from their memory, and they attain their original innate nature. What the evil person derives from their invitation and religious prescription is, 'He has no invitation in the world [39] neither in the next world' [Qur'ān, 40:43].

Also, if someone asks, 'Man's act is finite. Why should he get eternal retribution from the Almighty God? That is to say, Why is a [man for the] finite sin punished infinitely?' Its answer is: from the Almighty God no infinite punishment is given for the finite sin. But since the souls of good people by nature deserve reward, they remain forever and eternally in joy, delight, pleasure and good fortune; while the souls of evil persons by nature deserve punishment; so they remain forever and eternally in great repentance and abundant misfortune. We take refuge in God from them.

By these arguments and premises, it is evident that evil does not exist in the [primordial] divine origination (*ibdā'*, or Divine Command); that there are no two sources for good and evil. Whoever affirms these two contradictory sources and recognizes Yazdān as the source of light and good, and Ahrīman as the source of darknesses and evil, has accepted Yazdān and Ahrīman as two opposing [sources]. But wherever the [two] opposing [powers] meet like two antagonists, they need an arbitrator over them. Thus, both these ideas are a great error and a clear [sign of] misbelief (*kufr*) [in those who harbour them]. Peace.

Esoteric Hermeneutics (*Ta'wīl*)

Sixteenth Conception: Concerning the act of Adam and Iblīs

The belief of the majority of people and the people of Islam is that there was a time when God the Exalted had not created this universe. Then He created it [as it is said], 'Surely your Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days'

[Qur'ān, 7:54]. They say, the first man whom God the Exalted created was Adam. Then He brought forth Eve who was his spouse from his left side, then the progeny of Adam came into existence through the sexual union of Adam and Eve. God at first sent Adam and Eve to Paradise, and permitted them to eat every pleasant thing therein except the wheat, which He prohibited them [to eat] and said, 'You two do not approach this tree' [Qur'ān, 7:19].

Iblis was originally a great angel, and held the position of teaching the angels. When God created Adam, He said [to the angels], 'I am going to place in the earth a caliph' [2:30], i.e., 'I am going to make one [of the angels] my caliph in the earth'. He commanded the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam' [2:34]. 'They said, "What! Wilt Thou place in it someone who shall make mischief in it and shed blood, and we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?"' [2:30]. He, the Sublime and Exalted, said, 'Surely I know what you do not know' [2:30]. They said, 'Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us' [2:32]. [47] So they prostrated before Adam and remained as angels. But Iblis refused [to prostrate] and was proud, and said, 'Shall I prostrate before the one whom Thou hast created of dust?' [17:61], and said, 'I am better than he; Thou hast created me of fire, while him Thou hast created of dust' [7:12]. He did not prostrate before Adam, so he fell from being an angel to devil and has remained accursed by Him the Exalted, till the Day of Resurrection.

[Iblis] after that [incident] entered Paradise and appeared in the guise of a sincere teacher before Adam and Eve, and beguiled them and said, 'Eat this wheat. They were deceived by his talk and ate that wheat; so they were seized by God's punishment and fell from Paradise. But when they repented and said, 'Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be the losers' [Qur'ān, 7:23]. God the Exalted accepted their repentance and sent both of them back to Paradise. After that they never fell from Paradise.

All [these narratives] are mysteries (*rumūz*) and allusions [to something] which is implicit in the exoteric dimension of the Revelation (*tanzīl*). Those people whose reflective insight (*naẓar-i baṣīrat*) does not transcend the realm of similitude (*kawn-i mushābihat*) and reach the realm of distinction (*kawn-i mubāyanat*) cannot transcend the rules [of the former realm]; so they stick to them. Those whose reflective insight has transcended the realm of similitude and reached the realm of distinction, they confirm all these [mysteries and allusions] according to the rule of the exoteric dimension of the *tanzīl* as well as according to the rule of its inward dimension (*bāṭin*) and esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*) [of the *tanzīl*]. They confirm [the meaning] of each one of these mysteries and allusions from the point of reality and [also] the spiritual meanings (*ma'nawīyyāt*), by the permission of God the Exalted, and by His good will.

For example, regarding the nonexistence of the world, i.e., there was a time when it did not exist, then it came into existence, they say, 'We affirm that there was a

time when there was no world, then it came into existence. We also affirm that there was no such time when there was no man in this world since its inception. We also affirm that man has been in the world since its beginning.

Now regarding the world we say, 'When you say 'there was a time when there was no world then it came into existence' which world do you mean? If you mean this world whose heavens are elevated and decorated by the sun, the moon, the spheres and the stars; whose earth is outstretched, and in which mountains, oceans, plants, animals, and humankind have become manifested, then it cannot be said about it that there was a time when it did not exist, then it came into existence. Because if you say that there was a time when this world did not exist, you have said that the Creator at that time [when it did not exist] was not a Creator; or [you have said that] the Creator was [the Creator] but [48] *in potentia* and later on [when the world came into existence] He emerged [from potency] into actuality, such a statement is misbelief (*kufr*). We take refuge in God from it.

So it should be said that He the Exalted was always the Creator. Now if you say that He was [always] the Creator, then the creation, i.e., this world becomes requisite. So there was never a time when the world did not exist.¹

If someone says, 'According to this argument both the world and God are eternal, that means associating a partner with God (*shirk*)'. To this we reply, 'We deny neither the eternity of the world nor its being created. The world with respect to itself is created, with respect to its Completer and Perfector it is eternal; its creation is its contingency and deficiency; its eternity is its emergence from contingency to necessity, from deficiency to perfection. Since the real state of the world cannot be comprehended by the people, so they give imaginative and estimative [views and say,] 'there was a time when the world did not exist; then it came into existence'. The world appears different to everyone; for example, the world in relation to a worm in the stone, to a bird flying in the middle of the air, to an embryo in the womb, to a child, to a mature child, to a mature ignorant child, to one of the scholars whose knowledge is speculative (*naẓarī*), or it is instructional (*ta'limī*), or inspirational (*ta'yidī*), to each one of them it appears different, and each one of them can describe the world only according to his existential limit.

But this world about which it can be said 'there was a time when it did not exist; then it came into existence', they say that it consists of eighteen thousand worlds. The change of a [religious] cycle to another cycle, a prophetic tradition (*sunnat*) and community (*millat*) to another prophetic tradition and community, a creed to another

1. The issue pertains to the conflict of two points of views on the creation of the universe, one by Muslim metaphysicians, including Fārābī, Avicenna, Ṭūsī etc., who viewed the world as eternal but contingent on God from the metaphysical point of view, and the other held by Muslim *mutakallimūn* such as Abū Ḥāmid Ghazzālī and the others who viewed it to be created from the point of view of dogmatic theology (*kalām*). Cf. M. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 1983), pp. 222–226.

creed, each one is a world. Among these [worlds] when one changes to another, it can be said: that cycle, that prophetic tradition and community did not exist before but now it has come into existence. It is [saying], there was a time when this world did not exist; then it came into existence. Now the first person of that world who is the transformer of the previous prophetic tradition is the founder of that community.

[The meaning of] 'this world has been created in six days' [Qur'ān, 7:54] is: These six days are the cycles of the Founders of [six] *sharī'ah* (divine Laws) beginning from Adam to Muḥammad the Chosen, peace be upon him. Each day is equivalent to one thousand years [as God said], 'Surely a day with your Lord is as a thousand years of what you number' [Qur'ān, 12:47]. It is this world about which it can be said that there was a time when it did not exist; then it came into existence.

[People say] the first inhabitants in the first world were not human. But there was never a time when humankind was not there in this world. Because the goal of the motions of the spheres is the mixture of the elements of the kingdoms [i.e., mineral, plant and animal]; the goal [of the creation of] the [three] kingdoms is the human species. The creation in [the form of] gradation is decreed in such a way that the first to become manifest is mineral, followed by animal and then man. For if mineral had not been there, plant would not have been there; [49] if mineral, plant and animal had not been there, there would not have been man. [So] 'there was never a time when the world did not exist' [means], [there was never a time] when mineral, plant, animal and human species were not there. Therefore, according to this rule the human species has always been there [in the world] since its beginning and will always be there till post-eternity (*abad*).

As for [the issue of] Adam, whether the first man in the world was Adam, or he was not they say, 'According to the narrative concerning him, as well as the world and the [three] kingdoms, it has been gradually known that the human species has always been there, and will always be there in the world, but the first man in the first world was not Adam, and yet the first man in the first world has been Adam. With regard to that I say: the [religious] cycles are the worlds; the change of one cycle [to another cycle] is [like] the change of one world to another. So when a [new] cycle which is another world begins, the founder of the religion of that cycle, whose structure, mode, language, script, speech, conduct, activity, course, in sum and in detail, are different [from the previous cycle], is called the first man who did not exist in the world [i.e., in the previous cycle], but he came into existence later on and became manifest. As long as that cycle is his cycle, all the people [of his cycle] are named after his cycle and relate themselves as his children. The founder of the community in these seven thousand years who became manifest has been Adam, so [the people of this period] are called Ādamiyān (i.e., the followers of Adam) after Adam'.

In the cycle of every prophet, the outward dimension (*zāhir*) of his *sharī'at* is called the 'cycle of concealment' (*dawr-i satr*). The cycle of every Resurrector

(Qā'im) who manifests the [hidden] realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) of the *sharā'ī'* of the prophets is called the 'cycle of unveiling' (*dawr-i kashf*). The cycles are destined in terms of millennia, and every cycle lasts a thousand years.

When such millennial periods start, after every seven thousand years there is a Resurrection. When seven times seven, i.e., forty-nine thousand years pass away and the fiftieth thousand begins, then arises the Great Resurrection. In the course of these thousands of years, the cycle of concealment and the cycle of unveiling follow each other as night and day.¹

[The meaning of the narrative] of Adam and Iblis is this: At the beginning of these seven thousand years which had come to an end, the Qā'im of that cycle, by divine order and wisdom, closed the door to the invitation (*da'wat*) for the Resurrection (*qiyāmat*) which was being carried out at that time, and inaugurated the cycle of concealment, [i.e.,] the cycle of *sharī'at*, and was designated as prophet by divine revelation and sublime inspiration. He established sensory similitude (*mithāl-i ḥissī*) for every intellectual truth (*mamthūl-i 'aqlī*), and spread the slogan of positive *sharī'at* in the world. This was difficult for the teachers of the Qā'im of that cycle, i.e., the angels, to accept so they objected to it and wanted to get rid of the chains and fetters [of the positive *sharī'at*] according to the measure of what they had heard about the knowledge of the Resurrection. [50] When the order of the Qā'im, peace be upon his name, arrived that 'I know what you do not know' [Qur'ān, 2:30], they understood their [position] and found it necessary to apologize and ask for his forgiveness; and by accepting those commands and interdictions (*awāmīr wa nawāhī* of the *sharī'at*) they reached to that eminence and praiseworthy place intended for them.

Hāris-i Murrah, i.e., Iblis was one of the teachers [of the angels] of the end of the cycle of unveiling who had survived until the beginning of the cycle of concealment. Since he held the teaching position of the angels, i.e., the people of the *da'wat* of

1. This concept is the continuation of the cyclical theory of the epochs of the world held by the Ismaili thinkers of the Fatimid period of Ismailism. According to this concept, religious history was envisaged in terms of seven eras marked by the appearance of the seven speaker-prophets (*nuṭaqā'*, sing. *nāṭiq*). The seven *nāṭiqs* were: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, and Qā'im. The first six speaker-prophets were sent to reveal the divine *sharī'at* which conveyed a single, unified divine message, although each of them was forced to translate that message to fit particular circumstances of time, place, local language, and exigencies of a specific social group. The seal of the six *sharā'ī'* was Muḥammad. These six cycles in the Ismaili sacred history are called the 'cycles of concealment'—that is the epochs when the positive *sharā'ī'* are preached to people but their hidden truths are reserved for a few elite. The seventh cycle would be that of the Qā'im (or Messiah). He would not reveal a new *sharī'at*, for his function would be to unveil the inner meanings hidden in the previous *sharā'ī'*. It would be the period of *qiyāmat* (resurrection) when all the aspects of the positive *sharī'at* will be removed from the people except the intellectual aspects (such as killing the innocent, etc.), and the inner truths of all the six *sharā'ī'* would be revealed by the Qā'im (or Messiah) to those who accept his *da'wat*. Cf. H. Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, tr. R. Manheim and J. W. Morris, (London, 1983), esp. pp. 84–99.

Resurrection, and did not have in him the receptivity to learn from Adam, he said, 'This positive *sharī'ah* is a set way and the *qiyāmat* whose doors have been closed is the universal goal [of everyone]. I have reached that goal and attained [my] end, so why should I return from the goal and the end [which I have already attained] and once again become occupied with crossing the stages and degrees [of that goal, i.e., the *qiyāmat*]. So he did not accept the *sharī'at*, and said, 'I have comprehended the gist and essence of the *da'wat* of Adam so I have no need of it, therefore I am coming out of the noose of obedience [to the *sharī'at*] and [its] prescription.'

Then he said, 'I am better than Adam, Thou hast created me of fire and him of dust' [7:12]. By fire he meant the divinely assisted [or inspirational] knowledge (*'ilm-i ta'yidī*), and by dust the speculative and instructional knowledge (*'ilm-i nazārī wa ta'līmī*), that is, [his knowledge was] fire [i.e.,] divinely assisted (or inspired) knowledge, while Adam's knowledge was speculative and instructional. Fire on account of its rising and circumscribing [quality] corresponds to inspiration (*ta'yid*), dust to speculation (*nazar*), and water to instruction (*ta'līm*).

He ordered Adam not to seek the proximity of that tree, that is, 'Do not eat the wheat'. By 'tree' it is meant 'the tree of Paradise' (*dirakht-i khuld*) and 'the eternal kingdom' (*mulk-i yublā*), that is, the knowledge of the Resurrection. By 'Do not eat wheat' is meant, do not start penetrating into the knowledge of the Resurrection; do not express it by speech because its time is not yet ripe.

[Adam] was disobedient, and was deceived by the words of Iblīs and ate the wheat. It implies, when Iblīs refused [to prostrate before Adam] and was proud, he was cursed but he paid no attention to that curse. After that [episode] he came toward Adam and gave him speeches and proofs about the *da'wat* of the Resurrection of that Qā'im. Adam on account of being weak at the start, accepted what [Iblīs said], and on top of that he repeated that [knowledge] to those who did not deserve it. Due to this reason, he fell into the whirlpool of punishment of the Qā'im, peace be upon his remembrance. When he realized that he had committed an error, he acknowledged his error, and took refuge in God's vast compassion. His apology and repentance was accepted.

Eve about whom they say she was the spouse of Adam, means the spiritual meaning (*ma'ni*) of that *sharī'at*. She was informed about the principles of the inner dimension (*bāṭin*) and spiritual meaning [of the *sharī'at*]. The work of the *sharī'at* [51] of that cycle could only be completed by Adam and her. She at the beginning also accepted the words of Hāris, but eventually she turned to God with penance and repentance.

The [meaning of the] Paradise from which Adam and Eve fell, and the Paradise which they reached from which they never fell is, the real (*haqq*) which has a beginning and an end. As a rule we see contradiction [in everything] in the beginning; so one can say that there is [something] unreal (*bāṭil*) [in everything]. Finally, as a rule, we see gradation; so it could be said that the real exists and the

unreal does not exist. Anything real is weak at the start, but powerful at the end, but the unreal is powerful at the start and weak at the end. Due to this reason, the unreal appears similar to the real but in the end it does not, and its existence does not remain at all. Now the Paradise where Adam [and Eve] inhabited [in the beginning] and from which they fell was a Paradise which appeared real at first, but it was the realm of similitude constituted of something which was real and unreal. The Paradise where [they] reached from which [they] never fell was something real at the end which was the real distinction between something real and unreal. Anything which is unreal has eventually no existence in that realm [of the real]. The esoteric interpreters [of the Qur'ān], (*aṣḥāb-i ta'wīl*) have given this genre of interpretations to the similitudes and indications (*dalālāt*) recorded about the narrative of Adam and Iblīs. Peace.